

How to be a Christian teacher

A practical guide

by

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How to read this book

Of course the book can be read as a whole. However, to achieve maximum effectiveness, the 50 chapters should be studied and discussed separately, preferably in small groups, in order of preference. Such groups should meet as regularly as possible – every week or second week – to maintain continuity. Enjoy!

Introduction

You are a Christian. And you are teacher. But what does it mean to teach as a Christian? A Christian doesn't necessarily know how to apply Christian beliefs, values and norms in the specialised field of teaching. She or he must learn how to integrate what the Bible teaches into his or her daily work of teaching, both inside and outside the classroom.

Let's go one step further. A school's curriculum is often prescribed by the authorities – not only the “what”, but often also the “how” and “when”. Do these prescriptions leave room for Christian teaching? Can the “what, how and when” be adjusted without breaking regulations?

Yes, this can be done; it has and continues to be done by Christian schools all over the world. But it doesn't come easy. It requires hard work, regular Bible study, praying and discussions with others. The Holy Spirit must give you his wisdom, insights and energy to do all this. And He will. Christ has promised that if you ask Him, He will grant you what you need.

* * *

This book is the result of many years of Christian teaching and school management. It does not replace educational and pedagogic books or any other teaching material. Rather, it supplements. The authors have found that many – just about all – books on education, including those written by Christian authors, are very much of a theoretical nature. This is good and essential. But this book is practically-oriented.

Christian teachers want to be instruments in bringing up children according to God's will. He freely gives what is needed to those who trust Him and who are willing to live and work for Him. Through his Holy Spirit He gives life perspective and real meaning, also the ‘teaching life.’

The focus of this book is on how Christian teachers are to glorify God through their teaching practices and broader lives from a Christian – Biblical perspective; how to let God's sovereignty come to the fore in and through the curriculum. The prime points of departure are:

- Christ is our principal Teacher. (Matthews 23: 8, 10) He wishes to teach his children to serve and obey the Father sincerely. He does this by utilising broken and sinful people such as parents and teachers as his instruments.
- The Lord has revealed Himself to humankind firstly through his Creation and thereafter, in greater detail, by way of his Word. (Psalm 119, Matthews 4:4) Learners must therefore be able to perceive God's hand not only in the Bible but also in every subject area. The one cannot be understood apart from the other.
- Christian children belong to the Lord and not to themselves, their parents or the state. (Isaiah 54:13, Matthews 19: 13-15) Scripture clarifies that persons who lead a child away from the Lord shall receive a terrible punishment.

- Like parents, teachers do not function on the basis of their own authority but on the mandate God has extended to them. (Deuteronomy 6) The work of teachers is thus based on authority, provided that it takes place in obedience to the Lord.
- Instruction must always take place according to Biblical norms. God's eternal power, his will and his caring hand must always be at the centre of all instruction. (Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 119, Proverbs 2-5)

Only if a teacher is well acquainted with his or her subject area and is able to perceive the underlying assumptions and points of departure of every subject area, will he or she be able to look at it critically with Scripture as the norm, and teach his or her learners accordingly. Learners will then be able to understand that God is the King over all spheres of life and also how He is the King. The Lord must be obeyed and served with love throughout a person's entire life.

* * *

The co-authors of this book have many years of practical and academic experience to their name, as well as school books and publications on Christian education. This led to the conviction that there was a need for a practical book clarifying what it means to teach as a Christian and elaborating on the richness and benefits of Christian education.

The aim of this book is to bring home to the reader that Biblically-based teaching is not only possible but also essential. It is intended for use not only in Christian private schools, but also in public schools. As co-authors we do not have all the answers on the subject. We are ordinary, fallible, sinful people who feel called to share the benefits of their experience on Biblically-based education with other believers.

May this book serve as an instrument in the hands of the Lord, encourage Christian teachers, and enable them to see the rays of light in the task and calling the Lord has entrusted to them. May they, in obedience to the Lord and guided by the Holy Spirit, provide God's children in the classroom with the right guidance, development and insight, thereby serving the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, and his Son, Jesus Christ.

* * *

A very special word of appreciation and thanks to a few persons: Tony van der Watt, our dedicated and conscientious translator, Mieke Boon for meticulous editing and wise counsel, and Jeanne van der Kooy for her valuable support and proofreading throughout the long process. Many others also assisted throughout the process, some without knowing. Thank you all!

The authors
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Part 1

The task and role of the Christian teacher

Chapter 1.1

What makes a Christian teacher?

Objectives

To be a teacher is no easy task. The Lord provides clear directions in his Word, the Bible, regarding how adults should educate their children. Christian teachers must practically apply these norms in the daily task of teaching. Instructors who do so serve as instruments in God's hand to educate children to the glory of His name.

The teacher as a living curriculum

Most adults can testify to a person or persons who have had a special influence on their lives. One such person was a teacher who was known among his learner as Mr. Chips. To Mr. Chips teaching was not just "a job"; indeed it was the purpose of his entire life. He never expressed any negative comments about the profession, his learners or his colleagues. Every learner was important to him, even to the extent of trimming the hair of boys whose less-affluent parents were unable to afford a trip to the barber – at no cost to them, of course.

Mr. Chips always conducted himself in a firm but dignified manner. He didn't speak much, but when he did speak, people listened to him. Years after his passing many of his former learners continued to speak about the special influence he had had on their lives.

No doubt similar stories can be told of other Christian teachers who have played a decisive role in the formation of their learners' faith. In most cases such teachers are unaware of the great influence they have (had) on their learners' thinking and conduct. And yet the effect a teacher has on his or her learner, whether knowingly or unknowingly so, often shapes the lives of their learner well into the future.

Jesus Christ himself highlighted the importance of the relationship between a teacher and his learners by saying that learners would become like their teachers once they had completed their training. (Luke 6:40) Emphatically: not necessarily by practising what they had learnt or the knowledge they had gained from the curriculum, but by becoming like the person who had taught them.

Christian teachers must appreciate that the example they set in the service of the Lord may set the tone for their learners' future conduct. For example, learners in Grade 1 will regard everything their teacher says and does as true, right and proper.

Of course, it does not follow that only foundation phase teachers serve as role models for their learners. It applies all the way up to the senior school levels where, in some cases, even the teacher's style of dress will be observed and copied by the girls.

Not only teachers' words, but also their general conduct influences their learners. How teachers relate to their colleagues, cope with a crisis or discipline learners tend to be closely observed, often without the teachers realising this, and in later years this may become part of learner's own mode of conduct. A hasty expression vented by a teacher to a learner in a moment of anger can be used by learners many years later.

Christian teachers must therefore take great care with their language use, dress, work ethic and even the way they conduct themselves outside of the school context. They need to appreciate that in a certain sense their lives serve as a 'living book or curriculum' via which learners also grasp what such concepts as love and dedication mean in practice (in addition to learning this at home). In this way teachers play an active role in the moulding of their learners' lives and worldviews.

God uses teachers as co-workers in His service

In various places in Scripture, parents and other adults are called upon to instruct the next generation in the ways of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 6, Proverbs 1-7) This is necessary because children's trust in the Lord will grow in accordance with what they see, hear and get to know of the Lord's works.

For example, a learner who is taught, in History class, that God's will is discernible in everything, will also be enabled to believe that nothing happens outside of God's hand and trust that God works everything to the benefit of those who love Him. This growth in faith is not achieved by the teacher's ability to convince the learners, but by God Himself.

Hence a teacher ought never to be overcome by anxiety if a learner does not grow in faith. The teacher is equipped only with the task of proclaiming the truth. It is the Lord Himself who provides the faith, when and as He wishes.

The Christian teacher serves as an image bearer of the Lord to his or her learners. Through his or her conduct, the teacher must reflect and enact God's love, grace and justice towards his or her learners. A Christian teacher must thus never display anger or irritation with learners who challenge them in one way or another. By the same token, it is also wrong to knowingly look the other way when a difficulty presents itself, or to leave challenging situations for others, e.g. colleagues, to deal with.

However difficult it may be, a Christian teacher must continue to reflect the Lord's goodness and grace to his or her pupils. There is no alternative, because God Himself provides the teacher with the necessary competence. Ultimately the teacher's authority is not vested in

their position as instructor or in the school board (or other governing body) that appointed them, but in the Lord who called them to their task. The teacher who realises this consciously strives to keep this in mind, irrespective of how difficult the circumstances may be.

Just as the apostle Paul referred to himself as an instrument in the hands of the Lord (Romans 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 23), Christian teachers are instruments in the hands of their heavenly Father. As co-workers in his service, every Christian teacher must implement his will. The Lord never relinquishes his authority as Teacher or transfers it to some other person or persons. He is the One who continues to provide guidance, even as He employs parents and teachers for this purpose.

This is a great and glorious mandate, but also at once a task that comes with immense responsibilities. No teacher may mislead his learners by telling them that faith has nothing to do with a given field of study. God's sovereignty is, after all, not restricted to the church or inner chamber. He is also the King of Mathematics, Linguistics, life Orientation, Technology, Geography, etc.

Teachers also have shortcomings

The special position of authority the Lord grants to teachers does not imply that they have no shortcomings or faults. Teachers' own sinful nature will cause them to commit errors in their professional life too. Sometimes teachers wrongly accuse learners of contraventions or punish them for something they did not do. In such cases, it is important that teachers not only acknowledge their errors, but also, when necessary, apologise for them.

There are few things that grieve a learner more than a teacher who refuses to acknowledge that he or she has erred. So, strive to be a good example to your learners of how a person should apologise unconditionally and sincerely in cases of erroneous thinking or actions.

By way of their own conduct Christian teachers must always consciously endeavour to avoid provoking or exasperating pupils. Teachers can very easily be guilty of the following actions:

- Teachers who act as if they are superior by presenting themselves as always knowing better. The tendency here is that no colleague or pupil can correct such teachers or teach them anything that they don't already know.
- Inconsistent conduct of a teacher. This happens when teachers tolerate a certain action one day, such as eating in class, whereas the next day they declare it unacceptable and punishable.
- Teachers who have unreasonable expectations of their pupils or who act overly strictly. For example, the amount of homework imposed upon learners over weekends can be unreasonable.
- Expecting learners to (not) do certain things which the teacher does not live up to. For example, cell phones are not allowed in class, but the teacher him- or herself receives and sends phone messages.

- By imposing unreasonable or unjust punishment. A learner who is innocent and yet is punished will not easily forget it.

In such cases a teacher does not draw the learner to Christ through his or her conduct. On the contrary, he pushes the learner away from Him.

Teachers who are aware of their own brokenness are generally also sensitive towards the shortcomings of others. They understand a colleague's occasional tardy completion of an important task, or a learner's slip-up. It does not follow that teachers can therefore overlook something that is wrong or continue to neglect something that has already been neglected.

What it rather means is that other persons should be approached with the requisite understanding and empathy. The apostle Paul advised the inhabitants of Ephesus to react to one other with love if the one imposed upon the other in some way. (Romans 12:9-13) The same approach should also mark teachers' thinking and conduct.

Being a teacher

What a tremendous responsibility it is to be a teacher – to think that God Almighty uses ordinary human beings in his service to educate his children! Every Christian teacher must, in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, teach his or her learners to subscribe to everything God commands in his Word. His commands involve a great deal more than Jesus Christ's redemptive work on the cross. It deals fundamentally through Jesus Christ's redemptive work that God's reigns over the whole of human life, including the different dimensions involved in education.

In order to accomplish this task meaningfully, Christian teachers must take the trouble to acquaint themselves with what God reveals in his Word as well as in his works. Regular Bible study and a thorough grounding in their field of study are of utmost importance for all Christian teachers. (More on this in Chapter 4, addressing the Biblical foundation of every field of study.)

Teachers who acknowledge God's omniscience and apply it in their profession receive a rich and wonderful promise from the Lord. They will be granted great recognition in the kingdom of heaven. They work not by their own strength or abilities, but in prayerful dependence on the Lord. Like Moses, they can and must ask the Lord not to withhold his glory from their learners, but rather to confirm the works of their hands.

For such teachers, their daily task forms part of the practical living out of their faith in all areas of life. It offers them joy and peace, and furthermore rewards them with true significance in life.

By contrast, Jesus Christ warns that those who contravene God's commands and lead children to sin, is committing a grave offence. (Matthews 18:5, 6) People who are guilty of such conduct will one day have to account for it. This applies particularly to parents or teachers who draw children away from the Lord. Jesus Christ taught that it would be better for such people to sink into the depths of the sea with a millstone tied around their neck.

Christian teachers must therefore give careful consideration to the ways they can and must apply the gifts and talents they have received to God's glory. Whether you are presenting a lesson or coaching the school choir, everything you do must testify to God's honour and glory.

For consideration

The author of the letter to the Hebrews (Ch 13:7) refers his readers to the importance of commemorating their predecessors. Can you think of one or more of your teachers who had a special influence on his or her learners?

1. What did that (or those) teacher(s) do that distinguished him/her/them from other teachers?
2. What lessons did you learn from that person that you would like to apply in practising your profession?

Chapter 1.2

Being a teacher is a calling

Objectives

Teachers who see and live their task as a calling don't work, first and foremost, to make money or be recognized by other people, but to the glory of God. They gain true professional satisfaction from doing what He called them to do. It is essential that every teacher consider afresh what their calling is and how it should be applied in practice.

Labour in service of the Lord

What is the difference between an ordinary and a so-called 'master' teacher? And what is it that makes a 'master teacher' unique? Is it their exceptional knowledge about a specific subject? Their professional appearance? Or perhaps their ability to work well with others? All of these aspects play a role indeed.

But there is something else that distinguishes them from other teachers. It involves more than what is just superficially discernible. It ultimately comes down to how a right disposition guides such teachers' thinking and actions. The personal disposition of Christian teachers is guided by the Lord, who calls them to work in his service. All Christian teachers must therefore strive to be master-teachers to the glory and honour of God.

Teachers with the right personal disposition usually have the following three personal qualities:

- They have a special passion for teaching.
- They love the subject area they teach.
- They love the learners who they are called to educate.

One can usually see in such teachers' eyes that teaching is a lifestyle for them and that they love doing what they do. The passion and enthusiasm with which they undertake their task is infectious. If you do not yourself love the Lord and his Word and do not live in awe of what God reveals in your subject area, you can hardly expect your learners to be enthusiastic about it.

Learners can, after all, detect how you think and feel about teaching through your conduct. The teacher who is the more aware of this also recognizes, to a greater extent, the responsibility of the task the Lord has called him or her to as a teacher.

Do you guide your learners to perceive the hand of the Lord in your subject area and to cherish Him in their hearts? How can the Christian teacher enhance his or her efforts in this regard in the everyday work of teaching?

What it means to be called by the Lord

From various texts in Scripture it is clear that every believer is called to love the Lord with his entire body, soul and mind, with his or her entire life, and to serve Him with total devotion. All aspects of the believer's life are to be placed under the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. (Deuteronomy 6, Matthews 22:37, 28:18)

Unfortunately there are many Christians who believe that faith is a private matter, pertaining to home and church alone. Such thinking reduces Jesus Christ to a God who only redeemed sinners from their personal sins. They forget that God the Father granted Him all power in heaven and on earth. Jesus Christ is king over all things, including education – whether the world wishes to acknowledge this or not.

Awareness of this is far-reaching for Christian teachers. They realise that they have been called to serve by a higher authority. Teaching can take place in different ways, but only as long as it is to the glory of God and following his commandments. Disobedience to God's commands is a matter of life and death.

There can thus never be something like 'neutral education' in which learners are taught very little or nothing at all about God's words and deeds. Teachers who instruct their learners in that fashion are misleading them by failing to point out, firstly that God created, and secondly that He continues to rule over all things.

A teacher who sees and applies his task as a calling is not required to include a Bible verse or morality in every lesson that he presents. In most cases, this would be counter-productive and even reduce the authority of God's Word. Christian education is, rather, normative, according to the principles laid down in the Bible, in nature. In all subject areas the Christian teacher is to teach his or her learners to perceive the norms God revealed through his creation, and to organise their lives accordingly.

In the Economic Sciences, for instance, learners would absorb the fact that it is God who cares for us, and learn to realise that one must not exploit one's neighbour, for example by levying an unreasonable profit margin on your products or services.

What teachers are called to do

In Psalm 78 Asaph makes clear what people who educate children are called to do. The praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders He has done may not be swept under the carpet, but must be proclaimed to the next generation. The power and wonders of the Lord do not only refer to the Biblical narratives.

The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the church in Rome that God's eternal power is clearly discernible and understandable if we look carefully at the things taking place around us. (Romans 1:19)

The language that we speak, the mathematical calculations we do or the technology we use all tell us something of the Almighty God's existence and omnipotence. This message must be proclaimed to the next generation, just like the Scriptural truths.

It is not a simple thing to accomplish this task. Scripture teaches that it requires great effort (Deuteronomy 6). In the Book of Proverbs Solomon writes that children must be trained in the ways of the Lord. (Proverbs 2-5) To do this requires dedication and repetitive action. An incidental remark here and there is not sufficient.

Just as a coach works out a careful training programme for his athletes, teachers must also instruct their learners in a well-thought-out manner in the ways of the Lord. A Christian teacher needs to meditate on the norms the Lord has established and revealed about education and consider how these should be applied in practice.

Again, this is far from easy. A calling always involves an element beyond one's own abilities. No Christian teacher can fulfil his or her task on the basis of his or her own abilities, wisdom or insight. Christian teachers must, in accordance with the teaching of the apostle Paul, regularly pray to the Lord for wisdom and strength to apply their calling in practice. They must humbly ask for the Lord's help too when learners (and sometimes their parents, too) conduct themselves in a difficult, challenging or even improper manner. (James 1:5)

It is at such times that the realisation of one's calling helps the Christian teacher to maintain his or her balance. As a Christian instructor you can then go on to prepare for tomorrow's lesson or deal with a difficult learner with the necessary respect, knowing that that is what God expects of you and will help you with. It is the Lord's call – not your own circumstances – that determines your conduct. This knowledge helps Christian teachers to accomplish their task.

Beware of pitfalls

The idea of a calling is only truly pertinent in relation to the obedience God requires of his children. Otherwise it is no more than a human desire that can easily lead to all sorts of outcomes. Unfortunately some of these outcomes regularly manifest themselves in education.

Consider, for example, the school principal who promotes his own ideals for the school without bearing the Lord's will in mind, or the coach who tells a boy that, should he not use his talents on the football field, he would be rejecting the will of the Lord. In both of these cases, what is at issue is not the honour of the Lord, but rather the will of the individual.

Two aspects are of importance to avoid this 'teaching pitfall':

- Every believer must take the trouble to acquaint him- or herself with the will of the Lord. Regular Bible study, home worship, attendance of church services and personal prayer are all essential. (Luke 18:1, Colossians 1:9,10, Hebrews 6:1,2, 10:25) In these ways Christians get to know God's will and what He is calling us to do. Nowhere is it stated in the Bible that one should become a teacher, but He does provide clear

prescriptions of how teachers should conduct themselves. Every person who feels called to be a teacher must take careful note of these prescriptions.

- A calling always presupposes active conduct, not a passive attitude. Action is an absolute necessity. If the Lord had wished, He could have used other means to educate children, but He calls upon ordinary sinful people, people with lots of shortcomings, to undertake this task. Every teacher must give active expression to his or her calling. Teach, encourage, and caution your learners, and if necessary, apply discipline. Teachers who conduct themselves in this manner are serving in accordance with their calling.

Your calling in practice

Teachers who see their task as a calling and live it out in practice often ask themselves how God wishes them to fill their time and efforts. If God wants you to be busy teaching in the classroom, you cannot at the same time be out on the sports field or marking the lines on the athletics track.

By the same token, you may not lapse into workaholism since, as in many cases, God expects you to spend time together with your family too. It is important for teachers to realise that the call to teach is never their sole calling. The Christian teacher is also called by the Lord to be a good partner to their husband or wife, a loving parent to their children and an active member of their community.

The work pressures teachers (alongside many others) commonly experience in today's day and age often means that they don't pause sufficiently to consider how they should be occupying their time and efforts. It can easily transpire that you keep yourself busy with good things, even though they are not supposed to be your (only) priority. For example, coaches who spend long hours training their teams are often guilty of this.

Such people are prone to misconceiving that they are living out their calling in obedience, even though an imbalance has crept in their organisation of their time and responsibilities. Make time, therefore, to regularly consider what God wants you to be busy with and how He wants you to follow his instructions. Then you will live out your calling by being engaged in the right thing, the right way at the right time.

Teachers who enact their calling prayerfully will simultaneously act with the right authority. Their mandate to function in a certain way does not derive from themselves or the administrative structure of the school, but from the Lord who has called them to perform their task.

It does not follow that one's colleagues, learners or their parents will necessarily acknowledge and accept this. Nonetheless prayerfully following one's calling offers certainty and stability to Christian teachers. However difficult things may be, Christian teachers maintain their courage because they know that as instruments of the Lord, they are working to fulfil his mandate. This knowledge grants true occupational satisfaction.

For consideration

Think critically about your calling as a teacher. Where can you possibly make improvements?

- Do you take enough trouble to try to know God's will?
- What determines your conduct in practice?
- What do you keep yourself busy with that you should not actually be doing?
- Do you experience Christ using you as an instrument in his Kingdom?

Chapter 1.3

The example of Jesus Christ

Objectives

The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ is our only Prophet and highest Teacher. He wants to teach his children. For this purpose, the Lord uses ordinary people like parents and teachers as instruments in his hand. Christian teachers are called to acquaint themselves not only with that which the Lord teaches, but also with how He teaches.

Jesus Christ as the Teacher

The Gospel of John makes it clear that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, was not only with God from the beginning; He Himself also was (and is) God. Everything arose through Him; indeed, without Him no single thing would have been, is or ever will be. As the Word of God, Jesus Christ proclaims the will of his Father in two ways: firstly by way of the Father's creational acts (Genesis 1, Job 38), and secondly and more detailedly, through the written Word itself – the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:14-16)

To the Christian, God is not a distant and unknown God. He is our Father who allowed his Son (the Word) to become human in order to die for our sins on the cross. Through his words and acts, He came to teach us to serve God with all our heart, soul and mind.

Every Christian teacher must continue to extend the message that Jesus Christ proclaimed. This is the core of every teacher's task. In the study of everything God made, whether it be a particular language or the laws of mathematics one is investigating, the fundamental question remains: How should I teach my learners to love and serve Him not only with all their heart and soul, but also with their minds?

Thus the Christian teacher will look more deeply than the reaction that takes place when you mix two elements together in chemistry class. The Christian teacher must perceive the hand of the Lord behind it. In Christ, reality gains a new meaning. A Christian mathematics teacher discussing the concept of "time" should point out the wonder of God's creative act therein.

The framework through which the Christian teacher looks at reality helps in understanding the core of what he or she teaches. This is the conclusion to which the Proverbs writer came when he wrote (Proverbs 1:7): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom. It's only in God's light that we are able to understand things correctly. (Psalm 36:10)

True wisdom and insight comes only by way of recognizing the greatness of the Almighty God. The teacher with his own ideas and objectives, as outlined on his or her syllabus, is ultimately not at the forefront of education. Rather, this is God and God alone, as He wishes to make Himself known in and through all aspects of creation.

Jesus Christ's method of teaching

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of how teaching should take place. More precisely, the way He taught his disciples and others testifies to his fine understanding of the situation of every person with whom He was associated.

- Jesus spoke not only to those who were prominent in society, such as the Pharisees, but also with its peripheral figures, as all the gospels clearly show. No one was too important, too insignificant or too sinful for Jesus not to take the trouble to speak to them. Indeed, He took the trouble to communicate with those who had been rejected by society.

Christian teachers should emulate Him in this regard. Teachers may not give more attention to the top achievers or sports stars in their classes while neglecting the learners who have received lesser talents. Who do you, as a teacher, send to carry a message to your colleagues? Is it always the same one or two learners, or is every learner given a reasonable chance to perform tasks like these?

- Jesus dealt with all persons in accordance with their abilities and skills. He was sharp and to the point with the Pharisees, revelling as they did in the Law. (Matthews 23) By contrast, He dealt with empathy and tenderness with ordinary people like the Samaritan woman at the well. (John 4:1-30)

This same attitude must be manifested in every teacher. It is normal to expect high standards of the gifted learners, but the less-gifted learners should be treated with more empathy. Neither eight-out-of-ten nor four-out-of-ten is a good or bad mark to receive for a spelling test in and of itself. A smart learner who does not study but still achieves good marks should be reprimanded, while a hardworking learner who receives lower marks must be encouragingly praised for their efforts.

- During Jesus' ministry, He worked with his disciples in a group context. However, when the situation required it, He took personal trouble to deal with the individual who needed it.

Just as Jesus took special trouble with Peter after he had denied Him (Matthews 26:69-75, John 21:15-19), the Christian teacher must also take care to ensure that no learner falls back or drops out without reason. This positive attitude can be present only if the teacher develops a sensitivity to each of the learners in his or her class. The teacher will then be aware when a learner is experiencing emotional or social challenges that are negatively influencing his or her academic progress.

Jesus' fitting method of teaching

The subject matter Jesus wanted to teach had a direct influence on the method of teaching He used in instructing his followers.

- For example, Jesus conveyed difficult concepts, such as his second coming, to his disciples by means of a parable. (John 16:25) Since they were well acquainted with the procedure of a wedding, they understood that just like the five wise virgins, they had to be prepared for his second coming. (Matthew 25:1-13)

A teacher can thus explain difficult concepts, such as the national economy, to his or her pupils by evoking the idea of a family's budget. The learners then grasp not only how the national economy works; they also gain understanding about what it means to serve as a treasurer or trustee.

- On other occasions He gained the crowd's attention by narrating stories to them. The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is a good example of a parable by way of which He sought to bring certain truths home to his listeners.

Teachers can also use this method to great effect. Stories dealing with earlier generations' ways of living the faith can, for example, help to inspire learners to apply the faith in their own lives.

- In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1 – 7:29), Jesus Christ taught his disciples in a formal way how to pray to their Father in heaven.

There is, of course, a considerable body of knowledge and skills that Christian teachers need to teach their learners in formal mode. Every learner who has the ability should from a young age learn to read, write and do basic mathematics in order to learn how to engage with their own calling to the fullest.

- In certain cases, Jesus also used a symbol such as a coin or an element of nature to explain his message. (Matthew 22:19, 13:31-32, 44-47) The Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:17-30) is a good example of a visible symbol that points back to Jesus' complete payment of our sins on the cross.

If, for example, the coats of arms or mottos of a school point to the Christian establishment of the school, its teachers must go to the trouble of discussing what the symbol represents to their learners.

Not all syllabi lend themselves equally well to one single method of teaching. For example, in history the wonders of the Lord are the better illustrated by means of a story than will be the case in science or chemistry. Every Christian teacher must thoughtfully consider which method lends itself best to conveying the syllabus content to his or her learners.

Jesus Christ draws his audience into his teaching

The teaching of Jesus to his followers was often interactive. By drawing his listeners into his message through parables, He offered them the opportunity to correct their erroneous views and clear up any aspects that they did not properly understand.

- Prior to his crucifixion, Peter, James, Andrew and John all came to speak to Jesus separately about what lay before them. He listened to what was troubling them and thereafter answered all of their questions in depth. (Mark 13:3-37)

The pressure of working through a syllabus or completing certain administrative tasks can easily mean that teachers no longer spend enough time discussing matters with their learners. If this is the case, teachers deprive themselves of the golden opportunity to help form their learners' thought patterns. Hence it is important for Christian teachers to plan their lessons in such a way that it still leaves sufficient time for teacher-learner interaction.

- On other occasions Jesus led his disciples to arrive at certain insights by way of judicious questions. We read in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark how Jesus first asked his disciples who people were saying He was, and later He asked them who they themselves thought He was. (Matthew 16:15) In this way He brought them to the point of realising that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Christian teachers can also help their learners by means of thoughtful questions to perceive God's hand in the subject matter at hand. In social sciences, for example, a teacher can ask his or her learners to explain what things give meaning to life. In studying art or culture, learners can be asked to distinguish between good and bad forms of art. These are ways of prompting learners to give due consideration to that which they are engaging with.

Learn by doing

The ability to practically apply what one has learned is extremely important. Indeed Jesus Christ expects his followers to apply their faith in deeds.

- Jesus set an excellent example for his disciples when, during the Last Supper before the crucifixion, He tied a towel around his waist and washed his disciples' feet. (John 13:1-20) Thereby they received the indirect instruction to do precisely the same.

Every Christian teacher should apply this principle in his or her class. For example, one cannot expect one's learners to speak decently and respectfully if one tends to use bad or offensive language oneself. Instead teachers must set the right example by preparing thoroughly for every lesson and marking the learners' written work in an upbuilding manner. The teacher who does this may also contribute to fostering a good work ethic among her of his learners.

- Jesus also created opportunities for his disciples to go and apply what they had learned from Him. For instance, on occasion He sent his disciples in pairs to go and proclaim the gospel. (Matthew 10:5-15) An important aspect of this task was that the disciples were not to take any provisions with them. They had to learn to have complete trust in their Teacher in carrying out this task.

It is easy to tell learners that the Lord cares for them, but for a learner to believe this while afflicted by poverty and hunger is a totally different matter. Learners who experience God's care in practice, think radically differently.

Probably the most important thing any teacher can do is to express unconditional love for his learners. Jesus looked at the crowd and felt deeply sorry for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. His love for them followed over into deeds and He began to teach them.

The same attitude must also come to the fore in one's conduct as a teacher. Christian teachers must take the trouble to guide each and every learner in their class, no matter their circumstances. They are called to love every one of their learners, just as Jesus loves them. Such love promotes the learners' best interests. This means being firm when necessary, but also forgiving when this is required.

Jesus' love for his followers also extended to intervening for them with his heavenly Father. In the Lord's Prayer. (John 17) He asked his Father not to take them out of the world, but instead to protect them from evil. This was necessary for them to live truthfully according to the Word, just as it remains necessary for us today.

Therefore every Christian teacher must also intervene on behalf of his or her learners with the Lord. Pray that the Lord shall protect them and enable them to grow and increase in faith. At the same time the Christian teacher must never forget to humbly ask God for wisdom and insight to educate his or her learner in such a way that they learn to love the Lord with their entire heart and long to serve Him with their entire life.

For consideration

See if you can find more information in Scripture regarding the ways in which Jesus taught people. The following questions can help you to better structure such a study:

- How did Jesus' conduct towards believers differ from his conduct towards unbelieving people?
- Did He use only words or also deeds to set right what was wrong?
- How did Jesus handle people who actively opposed Him?

Chapter 1.4

The teacher as educational leader

Objectives

A Christian teacher must learn to present him- or herself in such a way that learners are able to see God's light in his or her conduct, and glorify Him for it.

Teacher or facilitator?

Every country takes its own unique approach to education. For example, in the implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa in 2006, the approach changed from a content-based educational approach to an outcomes-based approach. The educational authorities were convinced that, given the South African historical context, OBE would be the most suitable approach to unite all schools under one umbrella.

The new approach brought about various changes in teaching practice. One of these was that the role of teachers had to be determined afresh. Teachers would henceforth be referred to as facilitators.

Facilitators would no longer teach prescribed learning contents. It was thought that it would place a damper on the development of learners. The child and his or her development was placed at the core of the system. The educational leader would simply have to facilitate the learning process so that the learners would reach the expected learning outcomes themselves.

Although there have been some positive aspects to this approach, it has and continues to have its serious shortcomings too. One of these is that there is hardly any room left for the teaching of established truths. Yet the Bible clarifies that educators should convey certain knowledge to their learners.

For example, in the book of Deuteronomy (ch 6) the Israelites received the command to pass on God's prescriptions to their children. A person can serve God soundly only if he or she knows Him, and this knowledge of the Lord must be actively conveyed to the next generation.

Christian instruction is no mediocre, middle-of-the-road affair. Christian teachers appreciate their responsibility to educate the next generation in what God has made known in his Word and through his works, as this is touches on all school subjects. Children are not merely learners whose learning processes must be facilitated; they should, metaphorically speaking, sit at the feet of the educator in order to learn.

Like the author of the Bible book of Proverbs, Christian teachers must emphasize to their learners not to disregard their teaching but to take it to heart. (Proverbs 1-7) To succeed in this, they must continually (re)consider their role and task as educational leaders in the classroom.

The teacher as host

On various occasions Jesus' disciples did not want little children to be a nuisance to Him. But Jesus corrected them sharply and ordered them not to prevent those little ones from approaching Him. (Matthew 19:13-15) If we are not careful we can, still today by way of our conduct, prevent learners from reaching Jesus Christ.

This occurs if one does not radiate an attitude of understanding and tenderness toward one's learners, instead acting cold and distant toward them. In so doing a teacher does not lead his or her learners to Christ, but rather, by pushing them away, also leads them away from the Lord.

Biblical love does not merely consist, as the world sometimes portrays it, of a smile or the acceptance of something that is wrong. Biblical love rather involves genuine care for every learner in a class by way of the following:

- Being firm, honest and fair, but at the same time also patient and tolerant.
- Trying to involve every pupil positively, including those who regularly disrupt the class.
- Taking an interest in learners' extramural activities and inquiring how things are going at home.
- Building connections with learners without becoming 'too close.' Remember that there is an important distinction between being a teacher and being a friend.

A teacher who has love for his or her learners takes the trouble to make every learner in the class feel at home. Such a teacher knows every learner's name and keeps everyone in mind. This is not always easy because some learners require more attention than others.

To the Christian teacher, both the individual and the group are equally important. The one may never be neglected due to the other. No learner ought to fall back academically, socially or emotionally, but at the same time, no one learner should take so much of your time that it leads to others being overlooked.

The teacher as presenter

God uses sinful people such as teachers and parents to prepare his children for their calling in the world. He wishes to guide his children, and in this you may co-operate as instrument in his Fatherly hand. If you realise that you are a co-worker in the service of Jesus Christ, you must consider carefully how you present yourself.

Teachers ought not to be overconfident or look down upon their learners. As a Christian teacher, you know that your acts and habits are to reflect the image of Jesus Christ to your learners. They must be able to see in your conduct what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

In presenting a lesson, the teacher must guide his or her learners' attention so that they learn to focus on the right things. This will be possible only if you yourself are aware of the purpose of your own lesson. In certain cases, particularly with high school pupils, the purpose of a lesson can be discussed with the learners.

For example, learners studying a language need to know that language skills are important in order to communicate clearly with others in the world. In the case of learners in the foundation phase, a story with a practical application at its conclusion can be used to gain the attention of the learners. Thereby you help the learners to live out their calling, both now and later in the adult world.

Part of your task as a presenter is to get your facts right, and in the right order. Learners must realise that a certain structural order and rules apply in your class. For example, they must know that it is disrespectful to chat with each other while you are presenting a lesson.

By applying certain rules to their full extent, you are helping your pupils to absorb for themselves the norms on which these rules are based. If learners never learn to treat you – the teacher standing in front of them – with respect, how will they ever learn to respect and obey God who they cannot see?

The teacher as mentor

Viewed superficially, the purpose of education is the transfer of certain knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers give their learners the necessary guidance visually and verbally so that they can complete their school career successfully. In the case of Christian teachers, however, a lot more is involved than simply the coaching of learners to graduate.

Passing high school with high marks may never become an objective in itself. All the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a learner acquires can make sense only if seen and considered in the light of God's will. In Psalm 36:9 King David expresses this truth as follows: "In your light we see light." The foundation of all insight is to be found in the Lord alone.

Imparting Christian-based knowledge, wisdom, skills and attitudes always has the purpose of transforming learners' thinking and behaviour in line with God's will. Learners must be guided to make what they have learnt a part of their Christian value system. By means of critical questions learners must be stimulated to consider the values of the education they are receiving.

For example, it is good if learners know mathematical formulae, but it is equally important that they reflect on the God who formed those mathematical laws and what his purpose is

with them. As a mentor, you must make time to discuss these fundamental principles with your learners in your subject area. The fear of the Lord is, after all, the beginning of wisdom.

The teacher as pedagogue

As a pedagogue, the Christian teacher must not only teach his or her learners but also educate them. In this regard, as a pedagogue, the Christian teacher's task extends much further than simply the teaching of academic facts. As a Christian teacher one must also take note of the acts and behaviour of the young "brothers" and "sisters" in your class.

For example, a learner who damages his or her body through the misuse of alcohol, drugs or tattoos, or who pollutes his mind by looking at pornography, must be addressed regarding these problems. You cannot look the other way if you suspect such behaviours just because they might take place after school hours.

Paul's instruction to the young Timothy (ch 6:11-20) also applies to every Christian teacher. You must in all circumstances, with patience and at all times, counter the wrongful thinking in your learners, punish them where necessary and also caution them if they are indulging in harmful activities.

To be able to carry out your task as a pedagogue, you need to take the trouble to acquaint yourself with your learners' circumstances. You must never apply a "one size fits all" approach to them.

Consider the fact that there might be a learner in your class who has never learned, either at home or at church, to distinguish between right and wrong. To many learners, abusive language of swearing could form part of the general vocabulary that they hear daily from their parents or other family members. It calls for wisdom and patience to deal with such learners with love and to honour the norms that God set in his Word.

In conclusion, teachers may never act in such a way that they suppress learners' own initiatives. You must acknowledge your learners' unique talents and personal qualities by granting them the necessary space in which to live out all these aspects in a positive, Christian, way. Learners are part of God's magnificent creation that He created every person unique.

This insight is what this chapter (and the book as a whole) attempts to contribute. Take the necessary trouble with every learner who needs guidance, and pray to the Lord to grant you the wisdom, insight and patience to educate his children to his honour.

For consideration

Divide into groups of four persons. Conduct group discussions on the various roles of a Christian teacher. Give as many examples as possible from practical experience to indicate how you would implement your faith in practical ways without coming across as goody-

goody or becoming offensive to learners or your colleagues.

Chapter 1.5

The teacher as curriculum developer

Objectives

Most teachers don't see curriculum development as part of their mandate. And yet the Lord requires every Christian teacher to instruct based on a Christian life and world view. In order to ensure that learners absorb what is true and correct, every teacher needs to act as a curriculum developer in his or her subject area.

A teacher is not merely a technician

Teachers are often being seen as 'technicians' who have no choice but to apply the state's prescribed education policies. Many control measures and administrative tasks compel teachers to apply and teach the required material without having any say. Their heavy workloads further prevents them from performing any additional work.

The syllabus are mostly laid down by the authorities – and no longer by the teacher – determines what shall be taught and even when it shall be taught. Although there is some merit in the authorities prescribing minimum educational standards, this has unfortunately had the effect that many teachers stick to what the authorities require of them.

The general result is that most teachers don't see curriculum development as part of their task. They tend to accept that the composition of curricula is a function of the authorities. Various people in governmental education departments work to construct and evaluate different curricula. Although curriculum development is no easy task and experts can certainly play a role in the composition of a curriculum, this does not take away the teacher's responsibility to also serve as a curriculum developer.

To the Lord, instructors remain ultimately responsible for the material they pass on to their learners and how they do so. Hence it is extremely important that teachers realise their responsibilities in this regard.

For example, a Grade 12 Biology teacher may not teach the theory of evolution to his or her learners without also pointing out to them that it is but a theory (i.e. a hypothesis). The honest

practice of science requires teachers to also inform their learners about other theories concerning the origin of all things.

Christian teachers will consequently point out to their learners that theories come and go with the passing of time, but that God is eternal. God is beyond time, not limited to the human understanding of time. The revelation of God stands forever, as opposed to conjectural human theories. (Revelation 22:10-19)

A similar critical disposition needs to be nurtured in all other subject areas. This requires thorough knowledge of the subject at hand, but also a study of what God has revealed about the matter concerned. Any question can only be properly considered by way of hard work, dedication, and sound Biblical-mindedness. The Christian teacher ought thus never to be like a mere technician who follows prescribed directions blindly, but a thinking person who teaches from a Biblical vantage point.

The curriculum stems from the community

All of us are well acquainted with the image of a train able to move only in the direction of its own tracks. This image can help us to better understand the role of the curriculum in educational settings. Just as the train's passengers expect to reach their destination safely, learners also expect that what they learn at school will equip them properly to enter the adult world with faith in the Lord. Learners trust their teachers to get them safely to the next phase in their lives.

The direction of the train's tracks will determine how the learners develop in their thinking. If the curriculum has a capitalistic underpinning, learners will generally be inclined to pursue their own interests, but if it is socially underpinned, there is a strong chance that they will put the interests of the community first.

Parents and teachers are sometimes, or even often, astounded to observe what their children think or how they conduct themselves. On closer examination it is likely to become clearer how learners are products of the education they have or are still receiving.

If, for example, a learner is taught at school that he or she is the product of an evolution process of millions of years, the teacher must not be surprised if the learner then finds it difficult to see him- of herself as the climax of God's creation with special responsibilities in His image.

The same principle applies in regards to Christian education. If learners are taught from a young age that they do not belong to themselves, but to Jesus Christ, this will have a great impact on their thinking and conduct. Learners will then learn to ask themselves what the will of the Lord is and increasingly, to act accordingly. Therefore Christian teachers must take the trouble to guide their learners so that by way of their instruction, they develop a Christian life and world view.

The need for a Bible-based curriculum

The constitution and laws of a country generally form the rules or moral basis according to which the citizens of the country are expected to live. Many Christians too place their trust in the constitution to safeguard their rights. It is, however, foolish to place one's ultimate trust in something as transient as a country's constitution.

Although a country's laws can and do concur in certain regards with the Word of God (e.g. that the theft of another person's possessions shall be punishable), in other aspects it is likely to clash directly with the will of God. For example, many constitutions and associated laws insist that all faiths shall be taught equally to all learners as based on the democratic idea that "all faiths are equal".

This could imply that attention should be given to various religions. But a Christian teacher may not do this without pointing out to learners that there is only one true God with authority over humankind. In such cases, as in all aspects of a Christian's life, our lives must be conducted in accordance with the Bible and not a country's constitution or legislation.

The contemporary South African educational dispensation is a good example of the way in which a constitution determines practice. But also in many other countries, legislation, regulations and policies by the authorities determine the outcomes learners "to make good citizens of them".

The idea is that to achieve nation build, learners should know more of other persons' faiths. The content of a subject such as Life Orientation is rewritten so that learners are exposed to the idea of religious equality right through their school career. It is even determined whether learners may or may not voluntarily participate in religious activities during school hours. It is as if a country's constitution can determine whether God belongs or does not belong in schools.

Christian teachers must ensure that the Word of God determines their conduct. Although the fundamental elements of education such as reading, writing and numeracy remain exactly the same, the "Biblical spectacles" through which the Christian teacher looks at these skills and any other teaching material and activities turn the job of teaching into a special calling.

To the believing teacher, his or her learners' mastering of core skills is never an objective in itself. It is rather a means to a higher purpose, namely to serve God and love one's neighbours. A learner who wishes to study medicine must be encouraged to do well in mathematics, not for the prestige or the high salary that the medical profession might entail, but to be able to serve God and neighbour more effectively.

Characteristics of a Bible-based curriculum

Solomon wrote in Proverbs (Ch 1:7) that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. A Christian teacher can thus never be engaged in the so-called "neutral" exercise of science. Those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the source of all knowledge are acting foolishly.

Truth does not, as some academics think, rest on demonstrable propositions based on research. The truth is a Person, Jesus Christ. Christ taught us this when He declared that He was the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6) In accordance herewith Christian teachers are called to remould the curriculum in accordance with the Biblical truth.

At the heart of all Christian teaching is the truth that Christ is the ruler over all things. (Matthews 28:18, Acts 2:36, Romans 14:9, Hebrews 1:2, 2:8) Accordingly this fundamental truth must also be reflected in the curriculum. It must be imparted to the learners what God reveals of Himself in and through every subject. A Christian curriculum is thus effective only when learners simultaneously learn to discern God's hand and omniscience in everything.

Quoting a Bible verse here and there – for example, noting that Jesus loves all learners – does not make for a Bible-based lesson. Although time should definitely also be made to discuss Jesus Christ's love for sinners with one's learners, Christian teachers must guard against allowing such comments to come across as superficial. When they do come across as such, it can easily give rise to resistance against Christian education among some learners.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ taught his disciples that everyone who studies the Scriptures is like one who brings out "... new treasures as well as old". (Matthew 13:52) This parable provides a principle to be applied specifically to the development of a Christian curriculum. The teacher who takes the trouble to think through the norms and that present themselves in his or her subject area will also be enabled to bring out treasures new and old.

Think, for example, of the many norms and premises that an Economics, Accounting and Business Economics teacher will find about the economy in Scripture. Norms such as God's concern for the poor, the worker who is worth his wage, and the injunction to pay unto Caesar what is due to him, form the basis from which the economic sciences should be taught.

A Christian teacher will also consider how to apply these so-called old norms in ever-changing "new" circumstances. (Philippians 4:8) Teachers who engage themselves thus, bring light into a dark world.

The development of a curriculum in practice

It does not require a PhD to develop a Christian curriculum for the learners in one's class. What it does require is dedication and hard work. The structure presented by the syllabus must be adjudged and enhanced on the basis of the Scriptures. To do this meaningfully requires a solid knowledge of what God reveals in his Word. A Christian who studies the Scriptures regularly develops a feeling for what is right and what is wrong over time.

For example, a language teacher ought to discern when a certain text is not suitable to be used in a language lesson. He or she ought rather to use a text that is true, honourable, fair, pure and loving. This is also what the apostle Paul called upon the Philippians (ch 4:8) to engage themselves with in their thinking.

Regular prayer for wisdom and insight is indispensable. Ask the Lord to show you what He wants you to teach to your learners. Fortunately there are also numerous sources on Christian education that you can use to stimulate your thinking.

For example, Part 4 of this book discusses how Biblical norms are foundational to each and every subject area. Remember also that you never serve the Lord in isolation. Discuss with other believers how to apply your Christian principles in your teaching, no matter your subject area. A simple remark by a fellow-believer can possibly open up new insights that you have never considered before.

It is of great value to reflect on what you, as a Christian teacher, have learned from living as a Christian and adhering to a Christian worldview by way of putting it on paper. Learners are inclined to accept as true that which has been put into writing, whereas casual comments are usually perceived as no more than the expression of a personal opinion. Carefully wording your thoughts also encourages learners to come back to and further think about your points and examples later on.

The next generation of Christian teachers can and should also build on the teaching foundations of those who have preceded them. This can be compared to a rose that opens, gradually showing more of its glory. May those who come after us not have to re-do the work that has already been done, but rather be enabled to delve ever more deeply into God's beautiful and rich revelation.

For consideration

Draw up a list of points that you regard as important in developing a Christian curriculum in your subject area or in enhancing an existing curriculum so that it reflects Biblical norms better.

Chapter 1.6

The teacher as pastor

Objectives

Most teachers find themselves having to deal with learners who are experiencing certain problems on a regular basis. A Christian teacher must be able to encourage such learners by giving them the right guidance based on Biblical norms.

The need to provide pastoral help to learners

Society imposes tremendous pressure on learners. Besides being part of a family, achieving academically and participating in extramural activities, they are also expected to maintain good relationships with other persons and to act in an ethically and morally correct manner.

Complying with these and other expectations can be challenging for many learners. They may experience a variety of personal, social and/or moral problems. This can be very difficult for Christian teachers because most of them have received little or no formal training in the handling of such cases.

The special link (or bond) which the Lord created between Christian teachers and their learners compels teachers to get involved in learners' challenges. However, this does not mean that teachers must be able to handle pastoral problems at all levels. Some problems, such as learners who have fallen into a serious depression or who have been sexually abused, require specialized attention for which most teachers may not be equipped.

Nonetheless a teacher's responsibility does not cease at the point where he or she refers a specific learner to a skilled counsellor. Before the Lord, the teacher – like a parent – still carries responsibility for the well-being of the learner.

Caring for the well-being of learners is one of the fundamentals on which Christian education is based. This principle stems from the Word, where it is clearly expressed that believers must always act in the best interests of their neighbours. Jesus Christ set the perfect example for us in this regard by allowing Himself to be humbled on the cross for the sake of sinners.

This attitude must also be present in every Christian teacher. The position of authority the Christian teacher carries is not an objective in itself, but must be used to be of service. The teacher who applies this principle must be firm when necessary, but also full of compassion and empathy when the situation requires it.

What is involved in pastoral guidance

Every Christian teacher must strive to create a safe environment for his or her class in general, and for every learner in particular. In some cases this ought to be formally shaped

around, for example, a policy on the practice of bullying and applying it in such a way that it helps to prevent learners from being victimised by other learners.

However, this should also be the case in more informal ways. For example, by giving learners the opportunity to talk about things that are troubling them, you can possibly help them to find answers to their problems. In all cases Biblical norms and values must provide the framework for the provision of such assistance.

Great care must be taken in the handling of learners in need of pastoral counselling. A learner will be open to guidance only if the teacher acts with integrity and thereby gains the learner's confidence. A teacher who, by way of his or her daily conduct, indicates that he or she cannot handle matters confidentially cannot expect learners to come and discuss their personal problems.

Likewise, children who are treated unfairly in one or another matter could well refuse to receive counselling. But if the teacher and the learner share the same Christian value system, this will make it easier to generate the necessary trust on the part of a learner. Such a learner will then be more willing to discuss his or her problems with the teacher.

Learners who need pastoral help must not be confused with those who are guilty of misconduct. Guilty learners must be dealt with firmly, but learners with pastoral challenges require understanding and support.

At the same time however, it can be very difficult to practically distinguish between these two. What lies behind the conduct of a learner who does not adequately prepare for a test or a spoken presentation or whose behaviour regularly interrupts the functioning of the class? Is he or she simply being recalcitrant, or is this perhaps indicative of a deeper-lying problem?

Teachers must develop a sensitivity to each and every one of his or her learners in order to be able to answer this question meaningfully. The teacher who is able to do this upholds the interests of the learners correctly as Scripture teaches.

The ability to listen

Teachers are generally able to make things happen. Order and structure are important, and in order to complete the syllabus on schedule, every learner is expected to fulfil certain tasks within a certain time frame. Unfortunately this often leaves teachers with little time to devote attention to their learners' questions and needs.

The apostle James (ch 1:18) warned against this danger in his epistle when he wrote that the followers of Christ must be quick to listen but slow to speak. This principle also applies to Christian teachers. In taking learners' well-being to heart, the Christian teacher's concern must be for their emotional health in addition to their academic achievements.

A Christian teacher must take the trouble to *listen* to his or her learners. It is not always easy to do this, particularly when the next lesson still has to be prepared, or books need to be marked, or a team needs coaching.

It takes a conscious decision to develop a sensitivity to learners' questions and problems. Learners who are struggling with a problem realise very quickly whether or not you are prepared to help them.

Tell a learner that you will attend to him or her after school hours rather than 'quickly listening' to them just before the final bell. If your mind is not on the conversation but on the test that you still need to compile, you can easily give the impression that you are disinterested. Without proper attention to the learner and his or her problem, meaningful communication often falls by the wayside, making pastoral counselling more difficult.

Factors that influence good listening

Various factors can prevent you as the teacher from listening carefully to what a learner wishes to tell you. The following hindrances occur regularly in schools:

- External noise such as that of boisterous children, or the walls of temporary classrooms not being soundproof. These can often lead to poor communication. This can however be avoided by making use of a suitable space for discussions, such as an office or the school library.
- 'Internal noise.' This is more difficult to deal with because it requires a certain measure of self-awareness. A teacher who is still angry with a learner who has just misbehaved in class may find it difficult to focus on what the learner is saying.
- Prejudging what a learner is about to say. Given the nature of their profession, teachers are sometimes inclined to do this, based on previous experience with a given learner. This can easily lead to a misunderstanding between teacher and learner.

Teachers who realise that they need to consider the well-being of their learners take the trouble to 'actively listen' to them. There is a lot more involved than a learner's words alone. His or her tone of voice, language use, facial expression and body language usually convey as much or even more than his or her words. At times the messages learners seek to express also become more discernible by way of concentrating on the message rather than on one's forthcoming reply.

Attentive listening also helps teachers to bear in mind important information for when learners need to be given feedback. For example, teachers who forget learners' names or confuse important facts tend to leave a bad impression. A Christian teacher will also pray regularly to the Lord to grant him or her an open ear and a receptive heart to be able to discern learners' needs and concerns.

Pastoral guidance of learners

It is no easy task to provide learners with proper advice. Complex cases must be referred to a skilled person as soon as possible. At the same time however, Scripture also equips Christian teachers to address (certain of) his or her learners' problems pastorally. The book Proverbs as

well the epistles of Paul who address the readers as (my son”) as the latter is a good example. The following guidelines are of great value in such pastoral discussions:

- Empathetic understanding of a learner's problem is an important point of departure. It is not helpful to dismiss a learner's sense that he or she is being rejected by immediately hinting that they may be misperceiving the situation. Remember, to him or her it is an absolute reality.
- The manner in which you formulate your questions is equally important. An open question is usually more effective if an opinion or explanation is required. A question such as "Do you get on well with your parents?" should rather be replaced with a question such as "How do you get on with your parents?"
- Avoid loaded comments or trivialising emotions. Jesus Christ himself warned against judging what is going on in another person's heart. (Matthew 7:1, John 7:24) Avoid accusing a learner of being sulky or obstinate or rebellious without good reason.
- Guard against speaking too much yourself or changing the subject of the discussion. For the learner there will be little value in comparing his or her situation to similar problems you may have encountered in the past.

In his epistle the apostle James warns against the desire to impose our advice on others. (James 3:1, 17) Even with the best of intentions Christian teachers still sometimes fall into the trap of giving the wrong advice, possibly causing learners to rely on their own abilities rather than on the Lord.

A Christian teacher must continuously pray for wisdom and insight to be able to handle every situation appropriately, and ask the Lord for forgiveness in regards to any missteps that he or she might have taken.

For consideration

Think critically about how you deal with learners experiencing challenges and problems. What can you possibly improve on?

- Are you attuned to the questions and problems of your learners?
- Do you have the capacity to listen effectively to what your learners are saying?
- Do you take the trouble to give Biblically-sound advice to your learners?

Chapter 1.7

Christian teaching methodology

Objectives

In his Word the Lord proclaims what He wants parents and teachers to teach their children. Further, He lays down a number of norms regarding *how* to teach. Christian teachers need to be aware of these norms and how to apply them to their method of teaching.

Form and content

Most of us have probably seen one or another movie revolving around a teacher who seems to accomplish wonders with his or her learners. In such films there is usually a young teacher who succeeds, through unconventional methods, to reform a group of difficult learners into a model class.

Many a teacher's gut reaction to this may be that such a transformation happens only in movies or in exceptional cases. Realities such as class timetables and school regulations which teachers are obliged to follow make it virtually impossible to apply overly unconventional means of instruction. Still, these kinds of movies do encourage us to take a fresh look at the effectiveness of the education methodology we follow.

In general in the past, the emphasis in teaching tended to be too much on content and too little on the method of education. Learners had to memorise a lot of facts and there was little room or time for critical thinking. In Economic Sciences, for instance, capitalism or socialism were taught as 'givens' without critically analysing the advantages and disadvantages of such systems or comparing them to each other or yet other economic systems.

With the implementation of the policy of outcomes-based education (OBE), for example in South Africa, the subject of teaching methodology was brought to the forefront. Methods such as working in groups gained more attention, and to a great extent prescribed syllabi were abolished. Although OBE had certain advantages, it also had definite disadvantages.

In Christian teaching, both the method (form) of instruction *and* content are important. The one may not be given priority at the expense of the other. The way in which Jesus Christ performed his service on earth provides us with the perfect example. In regards to content, He taught only that which is true and right, and always in such a way that it was to the honour of his Father. Sometimes his words were sharp and firm, such as with the Pharisees (Matthew 23), but at other times they were loving and full of compassion, as with the woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. (Matthew 9:20-22)

Christian teachers today need to apply the same approach in their thinking and conduct. Just as water (content) can quench one's thirst only if it comes in a glass or cup (form),

educational content is of value only if it is presented and engaged with in a correct and upbuilding manner.

Biblical principles in the selection of a suitable methodology

Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they received certain commands from the Lord. (Deuteronomy 4:1 – 27:26) One such command, which we see in various places in the book of Deuteronomy, was that they had to educate their children in the fear of the Lord. They were not to keep this principle to themselves but were expected to pass it on to the next generation.

The Lord not only proclaimed the content that they had to teach, but also the way in which they had to go about doing so. These norms that God laid down for his children through his servant Moses still apply today, not just to parents, but also to every Christian teacher.

- ***Repetition***

The most important principle is that inculcation – reinforcement of facts and applications – requires repetition. Every teacher must realise that this is an integral part of a proper teaching methodology. However, repetition ought never simply to be repetition for the sake of repetition. Its purpose is rather that the content learners need to learn is gradually built into their everyday world and thinking.

For example, a Language teacher needs to give his or her learners homework assignments to practise the grammatical rules taught in class. In this way learners gain the ability to select their language more appropriately to the honour of God and the service of other people.

- ***Inculcation – reinforcement***

The second principle is that learners must learn to apply for themselves the Biblical truths passed on to them at home and in school. Biblical truths are, of course, always of value – whether one is at home or on the road, in bed or up and active. The methodology that a teacher follows must help equip learners to make what God has revealed in his Word and through his works, a part of their inner being.

For example, in Geography learners must learn that God not only granted humankind space in which to live, but also the knowledge of how to live and work in this space in a responsible manner and to appreciate it in all sincerity.

Teachers whose teaching methodology leads their learners to sit down and consider the way in which God touches their lives, help their learners to apply Biblical norms and values in their own living environment.

Choose a correct method

The word “method” stems from the Greek words *methodía* and *hodós*. The meaning of these words indicates the way or route that one must follow to attain a certain objective. Methods are never objectives in themselves, but act in service of a desired objective.

The purpose of Biblically-based education is to equip learners to live out their God-given mission to the full. The methodology followed must therefore support this objective. When a learner needs to add, subtract, multiply and divide, the teacher must choose the most suitable method to achieve this purpose.

Christian education always strives to inculcate the right attitude in learners. The Lord wants us to serve Him wholeheartedly. It is clear from Scripture that the correct attitude (faith in the Lord) rests on both knowledge of and firm trust in the Lord. (Psalm 78) To inculcate this attitude in learners requires the right things to be taught in the right way.

A characteristic of such instruction is that the teacher consciously and unconsciously makes use of all learning situations to guide learners' thinking to the honour of God and the blessing of their fellow people. The correct method of teaching plays a key role in the creation of this attitude among the learners.

The method that a History teacher uses to teach his learners about, for example, the Reformation or colonialism is not of minor importance, but is central to Christian education. If the mere acquisition of knowledge would be the requirement, the teacher could simply provide a chronology of these events. However, the Christian teacher realises that learners must also be able to assess such events according to the Biblical norms, premises and principles.

The method of teaching must equip learners not only to be aware of the events, but also to be able to critically evaluate them. A group discussion with guided questions can help learners to consider what they have learnt on the basis of the principles of Scripture. By way of such discussions learners can contemplate such questions as whether a reformation or imperialism is permissible, the positive and/or negative consequences of such events, and how the past continues to be influential today.

Selection of the right education methods

Christian education does not simply consist of memorizing unrelated facts or random Bible verses, or of a lesson on morality and ethics added between other content here and there. Christian education is always authoritatively based, and this shapes the methodology/ies used in teaching. A Christian teacher takes the trouble to determine God's will and to consider at all times how to apply it in practice.

If God wants learners to learn to read in order to be able to study his Word, the foundation phase teacher would impart these skills to her or his learners as effectively as possible. This teacher would take the trouble to establish whether the global or phonetic method is the most suitable to teach young children how to read. This is however no easy task: it takes hard work and dedication.

In practice, the teaching methods of Christian teachers aren't necessarily very different from those of their more secular colleagues. In many cases both groups can use the same methods (for example, asking one's learners to draw a cartoon in Art Education).

The underlying reasons why certain methods are followed, however, differ radically when it comes to Christian versus non-Christian teaching. Where the child's best interests or his or her creative ability may be of prime importance to some teachers, it goes much further than this for the Christian teacher. In Christian teaching the most important guideline is that learners learn to serve God and their fellow people.

Of course the age of the learners, their intellectual capacities and their socio-cultural backgrounds also play important roles. For example, learners who have access to a great number of resources by means of computer technology will probably not learn in the same way as do other learners. Furthermore, the same content may be taught by two Christian teachers in two different ways, because the two teachers' talents are not the same.

One method is also not necessarily better than another. Where some learners might study the consequences pollution has on nature by means of Internet research, others can do so through a practical project. However, the mission of Christian teachers remains to educate their learners using the best possible method, based on what God expects of them and taking into consideration their own gifts and talents plus the characteristics of the specific class.

For consideration

Consider and discuss the following points with each other:

1. Modern technology leaves little room for simple information-based instruction where learners sit passively and must listen to the teacher.
2. Experimental research is the ideal teaching method and must be used as much as possible in every teaching context.
3. Every teacher has his or her own unique method of teaching that works for him or her. A teacher should try to make use of that method and avoid other methods.

Chapter 1.8

The teacher's relationship with others

Objectives

No teacher performs his or her task in isolation. Christian teachers must thus carefully consider how they relate to other persons in the teaching community, as well as how they conduct themselves in public.

A Christian teacher is a gift from the Lord

In many times and still today in many places, education was and is a respected profession. In many cases the local schoolmaster, doctor and pastor were or are the only qualified persons in the community, and it was expected of them to take the lead in many aspects of life. The community honoured them for the work they performed and treated them with esteem and respect.

Unfortunately, this state of affairs has and continues to be subject to change. More often than not these days, one's status is determined not by occupation but by visible prosperity. Upon leaving school many learners prefer to take up an occupation that promises to ensure a good living. The service of God and neighbour has become less important.

Some persons even look down on the teaching profession. They hold the view that some teachers are irresponsible, are often absent and do not follow the curriculum as thoroughly as they should. Some parents expect the impossible of schools. Comments such as "Our children no longer learn discipline at school" or "It's Miss X's fault that my child is struggling with Mathematics" are frequently heard.

If a school finds difficulty in meeting the parents' expectations, the school and its teachers are maligned and disparaged. Sometimes teachers even become the subjects of negative discussions in the presence of learners, or parents actively encourage their children to resist the teacher's authority.

Those who do not think much of the teaching profession or who undermine the authority of Christian teachers don't realise that having a Christian teacher and even being able to attend a Christian school, are gifts from the Lord. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of believers and equips them with the necessary talents to serve, also in the teaching profession. (Philippians 2:12-30) The Lord works this way because He wants Christian teachers to educate his children in the fear of his Name.

Parents who realise this, will relate with gratitude to their children's teachers. They realise that teachers also have their shortcomings and human failings, but value the help that they receive in the teaching of their children. By the same token, teachers who realise that they are a gift of the Lord will take the trouble to practise their profession to the best of their abilities.

The parent-teacher relationship

Parents receive the command in Scripture to raise their children in the ways of the Lord so that they can live in the correct manner before Him. Because the raising of children is a comprehensive and also specialised task, many parents make use of believers to help them in this task. A Christian teacher thereby forms part of the faith community that educates the children.

As a "co-parent", the teacher stands not above or below the parents of the child, but next to them. Due to their professional expertise, teachers take the lead in regards to children's formal schooling to ensure that their learners reach specific academic standards according to the state's requirements. But – very importantly for Christian teachers – by way of bearing in mind learners' different talents and abilities.

The subject matter learners acquire at school ought, in the best of circumstances, to relate closely to the training and education that children receive at home. A child is bound to become confused when he or she learns at home that God created all things, while being taught at school that all things came about through coincidence or a process of evolution. A sound parent-teacher relationship can help prevent this dualism.

Parents should not merely be involved with the coaching of sports teams or fundraising. They can also make valuable contributions to the normative premises of the various subject areas. By involving parents in a particular subject in a structured way, Christian teachers are able to build connections with learners' parents, even as the latter are able to share in the formal education of their children in a positive manner.

It is important that teachers be aware of their learners' home situations. For example, does a learner come from a stable environment wherein he or she is well supported by the parents, or is the learner's situation of such a nature that it is difficult for him or her to concentrate on their schoolwork? By the same token, parents must also know how their children are progressing academically.

A parent evening once or twice a year is actually not sufficient. A telephone call or text message can help keep parents abreast of their children's' progress. Although it may be challenging to pursue in practice, the ideal is surely that every teacher should visit his or her learners' parents at home. Teachers can thereby not only acquaint themselves with their learners' circumstances, but also discuss their progress with the parents.

Teacher-colleague relationships

The Lord expects every Christian to live in a personal relationship with Him. (John 15:15, James 1:5) This does not, however, mean that you may serve Him in isolation. It's like a tree

in a forest. The individual and the group are equally important. Never may the one be prioritised at the expense of the other. This relationship is represented in Scripture by the image of a human body. Although every part of the body has its own function, the body operates at its best only if all the parts work together. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

The same principle applies to Christian education. In contrast to today's fashionable dispensation wherein every teacher can do his own thing, Christian teachers must learn to reflect together on how best to apply their Christian teaching in practice.

Every subject area focuses on a certain segment of God's creation and works, but in Jesus Christ all of them form a unity. Christian teachers must be able to indicate to their learners how all of this knowledge finds its fundamental base in Christ.

For the purpose of being able to do this meaningfully, it is good to be aware of the work of one's colleagues in this regard. Knowing about what the other teachers are doing, how their teaching is Christ-centred, puts you in a position of being able to point out to your learners certain lines running right through all subject areas.

For example, God's providence is as pertinent to Economics, wherein learners learn about production and consumption, as it is to Biology, wherein they are taught about the reproduction of certain organisms. Regular discussions with Christian colleagues will not only help you to be up to this important task, but will also motivate you to delve ever deeper into God's revelation.

Christian colleagues can thereby play very significant roles in relation to each other. Everyone has his or her difficult or "off" days, and it is then that a word of encouragement or simply listening to the problems of others over a cup of tea during break can be of great value. After all, the Lord commands us in his Word to heed and build each other up. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Teacher colleagues who are fellow-believers must continually encourage and support each other in working diligently for the Lord. By the same token, Christian colleagues must also caution one another if one of them perhaps errs in some respect. (1 Thessalonians 2:11, 4:18)

The teacher in the community

In his Sermon on the Mount, the Lord compares believers with a city situated on top of a that mountain, which cannot be hidden. (Matthew 5:14) This applies to every Christian teacher. Learners, parents and other persons in the community must be able to see through your conduct that you let your light shine in a dark world.

This definitely does not mean that you should, so to speak, walk around with the Bible under your arm throughout the day, but that your conduct must be of such a nature that unbelievers can respect it and, by the grace of God, come to recognise God's love in it. In this way too God is glorified.

A teacher who loses his temper with the referee or his team if a sporting match does not go well is definitely no light bearer. This also applies to teachers who are often absent, or who are inclined to drink too much at the social following a sporting event.

The image that teachers convey to their learners outside of the school setting is equally important. Their conduct must always testify to humility, self-control, patience, respect and love towards other people. Jealousy, gossip and selfish behaviour must be strenuously countered at all times.

By the same token, their appearance and dress style must testify to good taste. Young female teachers in particular must take care of what they wear. Miniskirts and transparent blouses might perhaps emphasise such a young woman teacher's beauty, but such clothing definitely does not convey the right message to learners.

A Christian teacher's responsibility extends much further than just the school property, and also doesn't come to an end when the school bell rings at the end of the day. As a member of the faith community in which you find yourself, you have a co-responsibility for your learners' acts and omissions, including after school hours.

For instance, Christian teachers cannot turn a blind eye when it comes to their attention that learners regularly mis-use alcohol at weekend parties or that boys treat girls indecently. In such cases, action must always be undertaken with great wisdom and self-control. It is also wise to involve the parents or guardians of the learners concerned in the process. Remember, the purpose of any disciplinary action is never to punish the transgressor, but rather to win him or her over to what is right and good in life.

For consideration

Describe in less than 120 words a good parent-teacher relationship in your school and how it could be even further improved in practice. If possible, place such an article in the school's newsletter to parents.

Chapter 1.9

Staff matters

Objectives

The staff of any school are its most important asset. The school's management or control body must thus ensure that they employ, whenever possible, only the right persons, and deal with their staff in an appropriate and Biblically-correct manner.

Employment of the right persons

It happens sometimes that the management or school control body misjudges itself in the appointment of a staff member. This was the case when a lady who had been awarded an excellent qualification by her university applied for a post at a Christian private school. Both the school principal and the control body were initially very impressed with the lady, particularly when she indicated that she was prepared to accept a post at a modest salary. The management body saw this as an indication that she would see her task as a calling.

Within the first few weeks however, it appeared that this was not the case. To her, the post – which she perceived as having a low work load – would provide her with a good opportunity to further her academic career. After many complaints from parents and a number of pastoral discussions, she decided within a couple of months to resign. Occurrences such as this point to the importance of ascertaining that potential teachers will be a good fit for the school they are applying to work at.

In his second Epistle to Timothy (ch 2:2), the Apostle Paul instructed him to find competent people to perform the work. Finding such people is, however, not at all easy. Christian teachers are also tasked with great responsibilities. Education is both an art and a science, and it calls for steadfast dedication to the Lord to be a good teacher. In hiring new staff, especially at a Christian school, the candidates should comply with the following three requirements:

- Not everyone receives the necessary talents from the Lord to be a good teacher. Only those whom He calls and equips with the necessary gifts can truly master the art of teaching learners effectively. The ability to maintain good discipline, to impart new

information in a creative manner and to deal with difficult children, is usually a good indication that a person will indeed be able to master the art of being a teacher.

- Education is more than just an art. It is also a science. It is unlikely that even a “born” teacher will develop into a good teacher without the necessary training, knowledge and development. The professional nature of the occupation requires that all teachers must have an academic qualification before they can be appointed. Teachers must also have a good knowledge of their subject area, know the fundamentals of effective teaching, and know how to deal with learners.
- Christian education also requires exceptional dedication – not in the first place to the learners, the school or the parents, but to Jesus Christ. This is the teacher's response to the Lord's call upon him or her to work in his kingdom. Teachers who approach their task from this perspective don't drop out when things become difficult. They appreciate that the Lord selected and equipped them for the task and thus they can, must and wish to perform it in obedience to Him.

From the above it is clear that only Christian teachers may be appointed to teach the children of believing parents. It is, after all, Christ himself who teaches his children. He does this by way of using believing teachers as instruments in his service. This doesn't mean that Christian teachers may not also teach unbelieving learners. Christ wishes to inform all people of his great and illustrious deeds, also in non-Christian or public schools.

Staff remuneration

The salaries that teachers receive often give rise to controversy. We regularly see teachers throughout the world agitating for higher salaries and better working conditions. In their view, education is the mother of all occupations and teachers should therefore be one of the best paid occupations.

Even if they are correct in holding this view, whether or not they are correct in holding this view, a Christian teacher ought to seriously think things through and present their concerns to the Lord in prayer, before withholding their instruction from his or her learners.

Christian teachers appreciate that the Lord entrusted them with the task of teaching and that they may therefore not take part in demonstrations or strikes. This definitely does not mean that teachers must simply accept injustices in their service conditions. However, the manner in which they address this must testify to obedience to the Lord.

The Biblical principle that a worker is worth his wage (Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:18) naturally also applies to teachers. School governance bodies must therefore ensure that teachers are reasonably remunerated for their work. This is necessary so that teachers can focus undisturbedly on their work. The work of a teacher who worries about whether there will be enough money for food during the next month is bound to suffer.

The Lord however also teaches that one must be satisfied with what one earns. (Matthew 20:1-15) Teachers who seek to live an extravagant lifestyle may not complain about low

salaries that cannot finance their chosen lifestyle. In thankfulness for what they receive from the Lord, Christian teachers must also point out to their learners what it means to serve as a steward of the Lord.

Staff training and development

There are unfortunately few teacher training organisations where prospective teachers can learn more about Christian education. Public universities generally make no effort to inform their learners how to apply their faith convictions in the teaching profession. Many Christian teachers have thus never learnt how to apply Biblical norms in their teaching practice.

The assumption is sometimes also made that Christian teachers do not need to consider the nature and character of Christian education because they are already Christians. This perception is erroneous.

The Bible makes clear that all aspects of a Christian's life must be applied in the service of Christ. Romans 12:1,2) This includes the teaching profession. Christian teachers must thus continually consider individually and in groups what Christian education means in practice and the implications thereof for their daily work and in the reformation of the teaching profession.

Christian schools that appreciate this need take the trouble to promote personnel development programmes, enabling teachers to jointly delve into the treasure chest of Christian education. Staff workshops provide junior personnel with the opportunity to learn from more experienced colleagues about how to teach Christianly, evaluate discerningly, and become faithful Christian leaders within an established Christian educational setting.

Staff members at a Christian school are particularly blessed because they have the opportunity to develop a joint ethos and to attain a state of unity within it. Everyone then knows what the school stands for and they support one another in applying it.

One's own preferences and prejudices are no longer prioritised, but rather the joint objective the whole of the staff stands for and strives to achieve. A teaching staff that keeps itself busy with this usually forms a happy group of colleagues because they experience the mutual bond of love whilst living it out in practice at the same time.

Christian teachers go the extra mile to grow in faith and obedience to the Lord, too. In his epistle to the Ephesian church, the Apostle Paul called upon believers to become powerful in the Lord and his strength. (Ephesians 6:10-18) The command to seek further growth in one's faith is highly pertinent to teachers, who serve as examples for their learners both in that which they do and that which they avoid.

Teachers who themselves experience no growth in their faith will find it difficult to guide learners in their faith lives. Those who pray to the Lord to renew their thinking simultaneously undertake personal Bible study, practice their faith at home and participate in their church community. (1 Timothy 4:14-16, 2 Timothy 3:14,15) In this way the Christian teacher will be able to live, pray and carry out the task of teaching in obedience to the Lord. Such teachers are a living witness of what it takes to serve the Lord.

Personnel motivation

The heavy workload under which teachers labour as well as communities' high expectations of them can easily cause a low morale among teachers. Such teachers usually find it difficult to attach meaning to their task.

We see the same problem among Jesus' disciples shortly before his crucifixion. Jesus motivated them to maintain their courage by telling them that He had already conquered the world. (John 16:33) Christian teachers must similarly also motivate their colleagues to labour powerfully in the service of the Lord. Teachers who perceive the deeper meaning of their task will, by the Lord's strength, be motivated to deliver their best at all times.

As indicated earlier, if at all possible it is good to articulate this deeper meaning in a joint staff vision. This provides a banner under which the staff can not only unite, but also press on in faith together. What the whole of the school stands for, each teacher can then make his or her own. If the objective of the school is to educate learners in the ways of the Lord, the teacher will recognize that his or her contribution is of critical importance and is therefore indispensable.

Personal encouragement must be given to those who, for one or another reason, drop out or falter in their motivation. This is the beauty of Christian education, particularly of teaching at a Christian school. The teachers are not in competition with each other, but support, encourage and motivate each other in the execution of their task.

Resolution of differences

Christian teachers are unfortunately not exempt from the work of Satan. Satan does his best to sow discord, division and dispute between believers. It is thus to be expected that differences of opinion and even disputes will arise between Christian teachers. Teachers can potentially differ in opinion regarding what their learners should do at a school concert, or how a learner with behavioural problems should be handled.

Differences of opinion are not necessarily wrong. Indeed they can be beneficial in learning to approach a problem from different vantage points. For example, the distinction between right and wrong in the selection of a sports team cannot always be avoided. However, both parties should agree to deal with the matter in an orderly manner.

The Bible gives us clear indications concerning the way believers should handle differences. (1 Corinthians 6:1-9) They should, for example, discuss their differences directly with each other. It is wrong to mention to a third party that a colleague has erred somewhere if you have not already discussed it with the errant person him- or herself. If that person heeds you and corrects what had been wrongly done, the matter should be regarded as closed and no longer discussed.

However, if he or she refuses to listen and continues with an incorrect action or to behave improperly, it is your duty to take a witness with you to address the matter further. (Matthews 18:15-17) Only if he or she refuses to listen to either person may the matter then be discussed with other colleagues. But avoid conversing with other colleagues or even learners' parents about a specific teacher's insufficient preparation, absence from classes or poor disciplinary practices. If a Christian teacher does not avoid this, he or she is directly guilty of contravening the Lord's law.

It is just as wrong to ignore a problematic matter that should really be addressed, simply for the sake of 'keeping the peace.' For example, if a subject or department head notices that a colleague is not performing as he or she should, the matter absolutely needs to be dealt with. However, what always must be remembered is the importance of distinguishing between the problem and the person. The problem must be addressed, but the person must be dealt with in Christian love.

If books have not been marked by the designated teacher to do so, for example, do not discuss that teacher by way of referring to him or her as "just not having the makings of a good teacher".

The author of Proverbs clearly warns against making ill-considered comments (ch 13:20). Sometimes it is also wise to pause for a day or two before tackling a difficult issue. Remember, persons who handle difficult matters correctly are not only acting wisely; they are also helping to build God's kingdom.

For consideration

Think critically about how you relate to fellow teachers. Where can you possibly improve?

- Do you take the trouble to share what you have learned about Christian education with your colleagues?
- Are you prepared to work in a positive manner with your colleagues?
- Do you handle conflicts appropriately?

Chapter 1.10

A code of conduct for Christian teachers

Objectives

A code of conduct for Christian teachers can help to unite all teachers under a single banner of Scriptural norms. By jointly signing such a code of conduct, Christian teachers reach a joint accord or agreement regarding what is right and wrong in the practice of their profession.

Why a code of conduct for Christian teachers?

Some societal associations have a mutually agreed code with the purpose of ensuring that the affairs of the association are conducted in an orderly manner. Most church communities have their own orders stipulating how congregational matters should be dealt with. Similarly, the code of conduct at Christian schools establishes and maintains specific norms for the purpose of regulating Christian education.

With God's Word as the guideline, Christian teachers must acquaint themselves with how the Lord wishes to order teaching to enable them to establish educational practices accordingly.

It is, however, important to realise that no code of conduct, however firmly established, can serve as the basis for all aspects of Christian education. The ultimate basis for Christian education remains God's Word. It might therefore be necessary to review the code from time to time and adapt it if necessary.

A code for Christian teachers is not an unchangeable law that must be rigidly imposed, but rather a guideline document. Its purpose is to formulate, for Christian teachers, Jesus Christ's sovereignty over all aspects of life and in particular over education. By supporting and maintaining the code, teachers gain the opportunity to critically evaluate their own and their colleagues' conduct, both within and outside of the classroom.

Christian teachers can and must sharpen up, encourage and if necessary caution each other to adhere to God's Word. A code of conduct for Christian teachers is, however, authoritative only if it faithfully reflects the Biblical norms regarding teaching and education.

A code of conduct

The following aspects pertaining to the teaching and education of believers' children, to which every Christian teacher can and must adhere, emerge from God's Word:

Philosophical and ideological aspects

As a Christian teacher I commit myself to the following:

- To love the Lord in all my daily comings and goings, with all my heart, soul and mind, and to seek the best interests of my fellow people, in particular my learners, their parents and my colleagues, by being of service to them.
- To recognise that the learners belong to the Lord and thus not ultimately to their parents or the state. I realise that that God will hold to account any person who cause His children to lose faith in Him.
- To acknowledge that God has and continues to reveal Himself in the first place through his works and thereafter in more detail through his Word. This implies that I must teach the learners to see God's hand in the Bible and also in every subject area. All the subject areas together demonstrate the almighty power and magnificence of the Lord.
- To maintain the authority of the Bible over all aspects of life, in particular over teaching and education, and to carry out my task as a teacher faithfully in obedience to the Lord, with the Bible as the norm or point of departure.
- To take the trouble to get to know the Lord better through activities such as the study of the Bible, prayer, home worship and church attendance as He reveals Himself to us in and through his Word, so that I may grow to ever greater maturity in the faith.
- To strive against Satan and his evil forces every day. This includes not only equipping the learners with knowledge of the antithesis between light and dark, but also making them resilient in order to actively resist Satan and his evil forces.
- To realise my own brokenness and sin before the Lord, as well as the influence of sin on the practice of my calling as a teacher.

- To actively accept responsibility for what may occur in and with the school community. This includes taking note of each other, cautioning each other if necessary, but also bearing each others' burdens.

Professional conduct

As a Christian teacher I commit myself to the following:

- To acknowledge that Christ is and remains the only true Teacher. I am called by Jesus Christ, the great Teacher, to teach his children as instruments in his hand, to his honour.
- To worthily fulfil the special position of authority in which God has placed me as a teacher, and to work accordingly.
- To recognise and respect all persons of authority who have been appointed over me, such as the subject or departmental head, the deputy principal, the school principal and the school board.
- To abide by all rules within the school context.
- To willingly subject myself to any disciplinary action if in my acts or conduct I have contravened some expectation or requirement.
- Not to seek honour for myself or the school in any activities that I might have undertaken as a person or member of staff, but to give the honour to God alone.
- To apply Biblical norms in the planning and participation of all intra- as well as extramural activities that may take place at the school. This includes aspects such as fundraising, sports and cultural activities, the recognition of achievement and leadership development.
- To conduct myself Biblically-ethically and professionally at all times. This includes aspects such as honesty, reliability, punctuality and loyalty.
- To actively support my colleagues as well as the management of the school in the execution of their professional duties.
- To resolve any differences of opinion or conflicts that may arise with and/or between learners, parents or colleagues in the correct manner, as laid down in God's Word.

Pedagogical matters

As a Christian teacher I commit myself to the following:

- To conduct all my teaching on the basis of Biblical norms. This means that I shall not indulge in honey-mouthed speeches or pious moralising.

- To assist in the holistic development of the learners. This includes their religious, intellectual, academic, social, emotional, aesthetical and physical development.
- To acknowledge the uniqueness of every learner, and thus that I shall handle every learner in accordance with his or her own needs, unique gifts and talents.
- To point out to learners that the Lord is fully engaged in this world and how their actions and moral conduct must accord herewith.
- To explain to learners the meaning and connections between everything.
- To treat all learners with dignity as image bearers of God.
- To continually serve learners with God's love but also to reflect that God's love and law are not opposed.
- To provide learners with a safe, secure space wherein their education proceeds with as little disturbance as possible.
- To carry out my task as a pedagogue in accordance with my calling. This includes aspects such as thorough preparation for every lesson, taking the trouble to deliver lessons to the best of my ability, and the regular marking of learners' written work.
- To study and familiarize myself with the norms the Lord has revealed in his Word and works as these pertain to my subject area, and to impart these norms to the learners.
- To remain abreast of new thinking and developments in education in general and in my subject area in particular.
- To maintain good order and discipline at all times within as well as outside of the classroom. A sound work culture and encouraging learners to personally take initiative are norms that will be of great value in the maintenance of discipline.
- To apply school rules scrupulously and consequentially without fear or favour of the person who is guilty of contravening the rules.
- To guard against the rules determining disciplinary actions, and not the teacher.
- To not give rise to resistance in learners by imposing unrealistic expectations upon them or by acting in a pedantic manner.
- To discipline learners (where necessary) in love and not in anger or retribution.

Mutual relationships

As a Christian teacher I commit myself to the following:

- To deal with all learners, colleagues and parents with appropriate love and respect.

- To protect the good name and worth of every learner, parent and colleague by refraining at all times from taking part directly or indirectly in malicious discussions or by indulging in gossip.
- To refrain from any form of belittling or psychological disparagement of a learner, colleague or parent.
- To regard as confidential all information such as learners' academic achievements, personal problems that colleagues might experience, or the non-payment of parents' school fees.
- To take care of learners with some or other pastoral challenge or problem.
- To honour the special place that the Lord has granted to parents as the primary educators of their children.
- To maintain good relationships at all times with parents by, among others, keeping them up to date regarding their children's well-being and scholastic progress.
- To acknowledge and honour the God-given role and task of the church in the teaching of learners.
- To recognise the limited role of the government in respect of education. The government may not take over the responsibility of educating children, but must ensure that there is order and stability in society so that education can take place undisturbedly.

Appearance and conduct

As a Christian teacher I commit myself to the following:

- To regulate my use of language such that it reflects the honour of God. This includes the non-use of swear words, belittling remarks or heretical statements.
- To dress in such a way that testifies to modesty. This also applies to make-up, the wearing of jewellery, appropriate hairstyle and tattoo marks on one's body.
- To conduct myself at all times to the honour of the Lord and the welfare of my fellow people. This includes aspects such as refraining from spending too much time on social networks or viewing inappropriate material on the internet, the misuse of alcohol and the way in which money is spent.

General aspects

As a Christian teacher I commit myself to the following:

- To avoid in any way using my position as a teacher for political, social or financial gain or misuse.

- To be a good citizen of the country where I reside.
- To engage with my position in society on the basis of service.

For consideration

Work attentively through the above Code of Conduct for Christian teachers and then answer the following questions:

- According to you, which of the above-listed aspects are not based on Biblical norms and values and thus need to be removed from the Code?
- Which other Biblical norms concerning education should, in your view, be added to the above Code?

Part 2

Forming and guiding learners

Chapter 2.1

How Christian teachers perceive their learners

Objectives

How a teacher perceives his or her learners determines the way in which he or she will act towards them. A Christian teacher sees the learners as belonging to the Lord, created by Him for the purpose of serving and living in a loving bond with Him and their earthy neighbours. God's will is thus of principal importance in the education and training of learners.

Different perceptions of learners

The harmony and peace in a school can very easily be disturbed. This was the case when a diplomat's children came to attend a particular school. Right from the start, the other learners did not like them. Whether the cause lay in their appearance, their language use or perhaps other habits was not certain.

One thing was however very clear: the other learners had one common interest – to get rid of them. The simple fact that they were "different" was objectionable to the other learners. One realises just how superficial and biased learners can sometimes be.

Unfortunately teachers are also often guilty of the same sort of conduct by typecasting a specific learner or group of learners in one or another way. To some teachers, learners are more or less like 'objects' that must master certain prescribed forms of knowledge and skills. Alternatively, other teachers tend to see learners as a bunch of rebels continually in revolt against authority.

Whatever the perception, one thing is clear: how teachers perceive their learners plays a major role in determining how they act towards them. If, for example, a teacher regards learners as inferior beings, there is a strong chance that he or she will conduct him- or herself towards them without respect and with contempt. This may become a habit without the teacher even realizing it.

Knowledge of this fault compels Christian teachers to give thoughtful consideration to the ways in which they regard their learners. To the Christian teacher a child fills no lesser or greater a position, or no lower or higher a status, than the one God bestowed upon the teacher him- or herself. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God reiterated that His promises apply also to children.

Like their parents, the children of Christian parents live in a bond with the Lord and must thus, despite their inexperience, be seen and treated as fellow believers. Even though they are young, they already portray the image of God and may thus not be treated negatively or indifferently. Like adults, they are sinful, and thus also need the Redeemer.

The teacher who realises this will always serve his or her learners with the love the Lord accords to them. This is what makes Christian education so important, and a blessing from the hand of the Lord: in entrusting their children to Christian teachers, parents can expect teachers to act towards their children with love and in their best interests.

All learners have a close bond with God

No learner in the world exists on his or her own. All people live in relation to the Lord, whether or not specific learners and their teachers recognise this. God formed them beautifully within their mothers' wombs, and they all belong to Him. (Psalm 139:13-16) Although millions of people refuse to acknowledge God's authority over their lives, there is no way they can escape his sovereignty.

This fundamental principle provides Christian teachers with a foundation based upon which to regard their pupils. Every learner belongs to the Lord. Like a potter, He Himself can decide what He wishes to do with that which is his. It is not for mere human beings to question the Lord's will. The implication is that teachers must, in willing compliance, carry out his will concerning the teaching of those in their class.

Teachers who realise that their learners belong to the Lord give careful consideration to how they go about working with God's children. They realise that God established humankind as the crown of his creation in order to reflect his image. The sinful nature of the learners might well distort that image, but this does not deprive them of the special position in which God placed humankind as stewards of his creation.

Christian teachers who see their learners as image bearers of the Lord teach their learners to reflect God's image to an ever greater degree. They must, for example, know how to act ethically and morally correctly, because things such as dishonesty during exams or the bullying of a classmate bring deep harm to the image that they should be reflecting – and thereby, to God's honour.

As the property of the Lord, learners must grow in their awareness of their Christian identity and task in the world – their cultural mandate to be fruitful and increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to rule over all living creations. (e.g. Genesis 1:26-29) The earth must not only be inhabited, but also worked and conserved. As with adults, children too received the mandate to live as stewards of God's creation.

Christian teachers who comply with their responsibility in the service of the Lord take the trouble to equip their learners for this task. From teaching the basic reading skills in Grade 1, up to challenging algebraic calculations in Grade 12, everything contributes to the forming of learners as stewards.

Knowledge of this fact helps Christian teachers to view their learners differently as compared to teachers who are not believers. The learners are a lot more than a group of individuals who simply need to reach their full potential. They are God's image bearers who need to inhabit, work, and conserve his creation to the glorification of the Lord.

Learners are on a journey to adulthood

Ideally Christian teachers work in a Christian educational setting. Therein learners ought to feel safe and secure, fostering their receptiveness to the influence of their experienced teachers. Christian teachers who perceive and evaluate the learners in this light, work actively to form their understanding, feeling, conscience and character in line with God's will. They don't see their learners as subordinate or inferior, but rather as persons who are as yet inexperienced in their faith.

The learners have, for example, not yet learnt the full scope and meaning of God's revelation in all subject areas. Therefore Christian teachers take the trouble to point this wealth out to their learners and coach them from a young age on, so that they don't deviate from the truth when they enter the adult world. It is a great and glorious task to equip the less-experienced in the faith with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to give effect to God's commandments willingly and with dedication.

Although learners are still inexperienced, they already have certain God-given gifts and talents. Christian teachers take the trouble to develop and further expand these gifts as effectively as possible.

A characteristic of Christian education is that it generally produces good fruit. Learners with good manual skills can apply the knowledge they have gained in the Mechanical Technology class in the service of their fellow people by, for example, fixing an old lady's car. The result is their ongoing growth in living responsibly and as a spiritually mature person.

The Christian teacher realises that, due to their sinful nature, learners will be inclined to evade their responsibilities. Therefore he or she ought to consciously create opportunities for his or her learners to increasingly accept responsibility for their conduct. Learners must, for example, be given the opportunity to work sensibly with their time by planning their own daily activities.

The unique nature and character of learners

As opposed to humanists who believe that children are good by nature, God teaches us in his Word that a human being naturally does what is wrong. This is the consequence of original sin as well as the person's own iniquity and Satan's onslaughts.

Christian teachers should not be surprised when learners are by nature disobedient, mischievous or even blatantly dishonest. They realise that learners, like adults, also have shortcomings and faults that lead them down the wrong paths.

It is thus necessary to set certain rules and regulations and impose very clear boundaries upon the learners. Pupils must know that it is unacceptable to talk in class while the teacher is busy presenting a lesson. Action must be taken against learners who contravene these rules – firmly, but still with love.

Although Christian teachers realize the sinful nature of their learners, at the same time they also know that their learners must learn to actively counter this nature. For example, although pupils are not naturally inclined to do so, they must learn to obey their teachers and respond to them with the necessary respect and regard.

In God's omnipotence, He gives every person gifts and talents as He sees fit. (Deuteronomium 16:17, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31) No two learners have exactly the same abilities or character.

Some learners receive many gifts in many spheres of life. They are academically strong overall, good achievers in sports and excel in the arts.

Other learners receive special gifts in more specific directions, such as language, music or art.

And then there may also be learners whose gifts may not be so easily apparent, or who need to work harder than others to stay abreast of the educational expectations.

A Christian teacher takes the unique gifts and character of each learner into consideration in working with him or her. The extent and nature of a learner's gifts makes him or her no more or less valuable than his or her classmates. The teacher must guard against valuing academically strong learners over others.

One or a few learners may never be so overly praised as to make others feel that they are underappreciated. All are equal in God's eyes and every learner must be judged and dealt with in accordance with his or her own unique gifts and talents.

Further aspects of significance

No learner lives or exists in isolation. Each one's home circumstances, the environment in which he or she lives and the persons with whom he or she associates – all of these have a direct or indirect influence on his or her thoughts and actions. As one blade hones another blade, so the one learner hones the other. Teachers know all too well how a learner can lure his or her classmates down the wrong alley by involving them in harmful activities, such as the misuse of alcohol or drugs.

Christian teachers may thus never view their learners in isolation, but must be aware of the social networks they form part of or within which they find themselves, and act accordingly. For example, a teacher who observes that a girl is becoming involved in inappropriate relationships with boys must address this issue with her and caution her and her parents if necessary.

God's Word teaches that He created human beings as part of the world, thereby also intricately connecting his children to the world. A learner's body is no less important to the Lord than his soul or spirit. However, due to the academic nature of education, teachers tend to place more emphasis on learners' intellectual rather than their physical development. Christian teachers, however, must also take care that learners apply and further develop their bodies to the honour of the Lord.

This commences as early as Grade 1, where learners are taught the correct manner of sitting, and continues throughout their schooling as they are taught to eat healthily, maintain their fitness and live hygienically. At the same time teachers must guard against learners placing excessive stress on their appearance, such as by spending hours in the gymnasium or in front of a mirror.

Children and youths must learn that an "attractive" appearance is not a proper Christian objective in itself. They must rather be taught to appreciate that their bodies are temples of God the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19) Thereby they learn to love God wholesomely and to serve Him with body, soul and mind.

For consideration

Divide into two groups and debate the following points:

1. Teachers must not put a damper on their learners' development, but rather allow them free rein to develop their thinking.
2. Humanism has wrongly influenced the view that teachers hold of their learners.

Chapter 2.2

The purpose of Christian education

Objectives

It is generally accepted that the purpose of all education is the development of inexperienced children into capable, responsible adults. It is however important for Christian teachers to acquaint themselves with the Lord's norms concerning the purpose of education as found in his Word.

The formulation of objectives

Some parents and teachers believe that the sole purpose of education is to create a safe space within which learners can develop to the best of their abilities in accordance with their nature and character. They usually set few or no formal objectives, because they are convinced that this would place a damper on learners' development.

And yet, although they may refuse to acknowledge it, they do aspire to achieve certain educational objectives. Their inner convictions and views about life provide the direction via which they strive to achieve those objectives. After all, the setting of objectives forms an integral part of any education.

Aspects that are important to the local (or national) community typically determine which formal objectives its public school system will pursue. The state usually reflects the general expectations of the community in establishing a number of outcomes that learners need to achieve at certain levels. Learners in Grade 3 are thus required to have certain literacy and numeracy skills before being promoted to Grade 4.

The objectives of the state are often strongly ideological in nature. Aspects such as nation-building, social justice and religious equality tend to be prominent in a syllabus. The state thereby seeks to produce "good" citizens that will meet the state's requirements.

The things to which a teacher attaches value play an equally important role in his or her day-to-day teaching. Although teachers seldom articulate their personal objectives in a formal manner, it does not follow that they don't strive after certain objectives. For example, teachers who attach considerable value to their learners' human dignity may be nurturing a concern for human rights in their learners.

Alternatively, the purpose of other teachers is to guide their learners to achieve at all costs – a sort of pragmatism. And differently again, Christian teachers explicitly emphasise the objective of teaching their learners to serve the Lord in everything they do. Such diverse approaches can also be discerned among staff members of the same school. Not all teachers necessarily have the same purpose in mind, even though they are dealing with the same curriculum.

The purpose of Christian education

In regards to Christian teachers, how they think about God and his Word determines the nature and character of their instruction. Teachers who recognise God as the King over all spheres of life (including education) will perform their task based on this foundation. To such teachers, all academic, sports, cultural and social activities at school take place with and in the light of one sole objective.

We see this overriding purpose in the first epistle of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, where he instructed Christ's followers in Corinth to do everything to the honour and glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

The honour of God must guide all that the Christian teacher does and avoids doing. In the light hereof the Grade 7 Technology syllabus, for example, does not only have the purpose of making learners technologically literate, but all the more, to teach them to serve and glorify God through technology. The same principle applies to all other subject areas.

A more direct and concrete objective for Christian education can be formulated on the basis of God's honour as the overriding purpose in the lives of believers. In his second epistle to the young Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote that the whole of Scripture was provided by God to lead people to perfection in every good work through preaching, refutation, disciplining and teaching. (2 Timothy 3:14-17) Although the passage concerned does not deal directly with the teaching of children, it is applicable to both learners and teachers today.

The purpose of Christian education is to lead learners to maturity in Christ, and thereby to enable them to do God's will and glorify Him. Christian teachers therefore go to great lengths to teach their learners to read, write and calculate correctly. Learners are thereby equipped from a young age to take up their calling, later in life, as plumbers, dentists, farmers or whatever other job in obedience to the Lord.

Further objectives of Christian education

The Bible provides us with a good number of objectives that parents, teachers and other educators need to strive towards with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to lead their children or learners to spiritual maturity. Included, among others, are the following:

Guiding learners so that they get to know God in and through his Word. Learners can serve the Lord appropriately only if his will is brought home to them. Christian teachers thus always have the task of conveying the norms God has revealed in his Word to their learners. With the blessing of the Lord, if learners are taught correctly about God's being, they will also learn to trust Him ever more.

This is the true faith. Christian teachers thus go to the trouble of engrossing themselves in the wealth of God's Word in order to be able to proclaim his will and norms to the next generation. Christian education guides learners in the faith by teaching them about God's omnipotence, justice, mercy, compassion and love.

Christian education guides learners also in being aware of God's creation and coming to understand it correctly. Learners must learn to see God's hand in the coherence and integration of all things. Christian education thus always has the objective of seeing and judging all created things in the light of God's revelation.

For example, learners in the natural and chemical sciences must learn that God not only created the natural forces that are being studied; He also continues to maintain them through his eternal power. Indeed Christian education has the purpose of demonstrating to learners that all the facets of their lives, in all spheres of society and in all spheres of God's creation, must be regarded as subject to God's eternal kingship.

Guiding learners in their various phases of development. Learners need to be well aware of their own sinful nature and know how important it is to continually reform their thinking and conduct back to the will of God. In this way Christian education always has the purpose of forming learners' Christian characters. (Romans 12:2)

For example, learners in the Life Orientation class must learn that it is foolish to rely on their own insight and abilities. Much better that they learn from a young age to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and understanding, and rely on Him alone.

Forming and maintaining relationships according to the Biblical principles regarding human behaviour and interaction. Learners must be aware that the moral values they display towards other people need to be based on Biblical norms. Accordingly Christian education always has the purpose of portraying to learners how they should conduct themselves towards other persons, both within and outside of their faith.

For example, in Economic and Management Sciences, learners must also learn to respect the interests of other people in the economy. Thereby Christian education seeks to create a sound, God-fearing community.

Christian education has the overall purpose of teaching learners to live in the right relationship with God. They must be aware of their own unrighteousness and on that basis, realise how dependent they are on Jesus Christ's redemptive work on the cross. In thankfulness for Christ's saving grace, they must set themselves to living obediently before God and serve Him with all their being. What a privilege it is for Christian teachers to be able to give effect to this purpose in the everyday carrying out of their work!

Setting objectives in practice

In practice Christian teachers have a great responsibility they must carry out. They are expected to continually reflect on whether they still have the Lord's will in mind, or whether they are not perhaps pursuing their own or the secular world's ideals.

It can easily happen that Christian teachers too become caught up in the effort of making a "success" of their learners in the world. Then their work no longer reflects the honour of God, but has rather become a matter of giving learners the best possible head start in life. Ask the

Lord in prayer for wisdom and insight so that you not only pursue the right objectives, but also go about doing so in the right manner.

The task of Christian teachers is frequently impeded by the fact that, due to their sinful nature, learners tend to follow the world and all its seductions, even as Christian teachers themselves must also guard against worldly temptations. Learners are by nature inclined to put their own objectives ahead of all others, and very easily lead a self-centred life.

In the eyes of many learners, education is a means toward financial prosperity, and they wish to get their schooling over and done with as quickly as possible in order to achieve their actual objective.

However, if teachers succeed in guiding their learners to live in dependence on the Lord, Jesus' words to the scribes and pharisees will be ever more fulfilled, namely that children will bring praise to God for what He Himself has prepared for them. (Psalm 8:3, Matthews 21:16) Such expressions of praise to the Lord drive the evil one away!

For consideration

1. Think critically about the amount of time you devote to activities. Where can you possibly improve?
2. Do you regularly contemplate the purpose(s) of Christian education and how you can apply it/these in your teaching?
3. Do you formulate clear objectives to strive towards in your subject area and do you explain these clearly-Biblically to your learners?
4. Draw up a list of the objectives you would like to achieve as a teacher. Motivate why these specific objectives are important to you.

Chapter 2.3

The moral formation of learners

Objectives

Teaching learners to understand the difference between good and bad, right and wrong, is one of the Christian teacher's most important tasks. To perform this task appropriately in regards to learners' different development phases requires teachers to understand and deal with each phase according to what learners can typically be expected to understand when in a particular phase. The learner who is formed on the basis of God's Spirit and Word will be able to faithfully live out his or her calling in life.

Why is the moral formation of learners so important?

The Lord inculcates obedience to certain moral values in the hearts of believers and unbelievers both. Teachers should therefore be able to maintain a general moral order in their classes within which all learners can function.

For example, learners of different faiths will agree that it is wrong to cheat during exams or to steal their schoolmates' property. If it were not for God's grace in this connection, there would have been total chaos, and very little teaching could take place.

However, it does not follow that learners have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong in every regard. Due to their sinful nature, even believing learners may tend to choose the wrong path. Mercifully, the Lord guides humankind by setting clear norms in his Word concerning how to order one's life.

Christian parents and teachers take the trouble to guide their children according to the Biblical truths, such as, for example, that you must do good to other people. They realise that learners will be able to serve God obediently only if they get to know his covenant commands, promises and retribution as contained in his Word, and order their lives accordingly. Such teachers are thankful when they see their learners starting to distinguish between right and wrong in the light of the Word to apply it in their everyday lives.

For example, a colleague related her joy when a learner in grade two explained to his classmates that the Lord expected them to treat the school's garden workers with respect. The teacher was able to see in this the Lord confirming her work. Make no mistake, it is no easy task! Hence the importance of every Christian teacher working actively on the moral forming of his or her learners.

Moral development in preschool children

Moral thinking, conduct and feeling can be observed in children as young as 18 months. By then their understanding and language capacity has usually developed to such an extent that they are able to understand certain rules of conduct and begin to behave accordingly – or deliberately refuse to obey them. For example, children of that age are able to close their eyes during prayers or help a friend up after he or she has fallen.

Around the age of three children gain the capacity to control their own conduct and start to avoid undesirable behaviour. They will, for example, refuse to undress in front of each other, and consciously stop using bad language when they realise that it is wrongful. They take pride in their behaviour complying with what is expected of them, and become upset if they contravene a rule. Just think of the reaction of a toddler if he or she accidentally spills their cool drink or breaks a glass.

A learners' early moral development is extremely important because it lays the foundation for their later moral development. Pre-primary school teachers mustn't think that, because their learners cannot fully understand everything that takes place, it doesn't have an influence on their thinking and conduct. Even though they remember little of a portion read from the Bible, or find it difficult to keep their eyes closed during a prayer, learners nevertheless absorb important moral values from these actions.

They see in their teacher's conduct what it means to be respectful. They also become aware that there is an almighty God who – even though they cannot see Him – nevertheless guides the teacher's behaviour. Thereby they already start to develop respect for God, even though they don't yet know Him as He proclaims Himself to them in his Word.

The moral development of primary school learners

The period between learners' sixth and twelfth years is known as their middle years. It is a period of relative calm before the learners advance to adolescence. During the first half of this phase (about six to nine years), learners become aware of rules and generally obey them diligently.

For example, learners who play marbles during the school break know exactly what the rules are, and those who don't adhere to them are excluded from the game. The rules are usually applied so strictly that there is little room for mitigating circumstances.

For example, a learner in this phase will be enraged by someone who tries to push into the tuck shop queue by coming to stand and chat with a friend in the row. Rules are generally complied with out of fear of punishment, and those who contravene a rule will spontaneously be reported to the teacher.

During the second part of this phase (about ten to twelve years), learners start to conduct themselves a bit more flexibly. They realise that certain rules, such as leaving the classroom without permission, can be broken if there is a good reason for it. At this age learners also

begin to be able to distinguish between transgressions according to the motives behind them.

For example, in their view, a learner who deliberately breaks a chair deserves a heavier punishment than someone who does so by accident.

Furthermore, they realise that rules are not absolute and may therefore sometimes be questioned. Learners will, for example, want to know from the teachers why they may not eat in class, or why they need to walk in line during class rotation. Rules are no longer complied with unconditionally, but only insofar that learners are compelled by or habitually believe in them.

Teachers of learners in this phase regularly need to point out that rules have no value in themselves. The rules that apply today might be subject to change tomorrow. Rules have value only to the extent that they relate to something bigger or more important. Sport rules have the purpose of explaining to the players how they need to conduct themselves during a match.

It is exactly the same in respect of the Biblical norms that learners increasingly need to become acquainted with. These also point to something greater, namely God's will. Jesus Christ confirmed this principle when He told the Pharisees that He was also Lord of the Sabbath. To them, the law of the Sabbath was important, not Christ who was the Lord of the law. (Matthew 12:8)

Right thinking in this connection must be instilled in the learners from a young age. Learners must obey their teachers because the Lord expects this of them, and not purely because it is required by the school regulations. This also explains why certain rules, such as the need to take care of their possessions, will remain unchanged.

The moral development of high school learners

During their early adolescence (13 to 15 years) learners start to develop their own personal value system. In many cases this happens with considerable difficulty and strife. Learners suddenly start to question existing values or even openly challenge them.

For example, they might demand that their teachers organise a disco for them at the school, while others will arrange with each other to smoke a cigarette or two on the playground. This phase also tends to be characterised by regular conflicts between learners and their teachers. You will sometimes need to apply considerable self-control to resist making a snide remark to learners who deliberately ignore or even challenge all rules.

Many Christian teachers find it difficult to accept that even believing learners may appear to align their values to the views of their peer group. In many cases, however, this is merely the learners' way of seeking a reaction to their own thinking and actions.

For example, a learner might wear a questionable T-shirt to see how his or her teacher reacts to it. It is thus of utmost importance that teachers never lose their self-control by

scolding or shouting at such a learner. Teachers who make themselves guilty of this must not imagine that they are winning their learners to the Lord through their conduct. On the contrary, such conduct actually drives away those who are in search of answers.

There are two matters of significance in the moral formation of adolescents, namely "content" and "form". What you say to your learners as well as how you say it are both highly important. The intellectual level of learners is usually developed to such an extent at the end of this phase (16 - 19 years) that weak arguments such as "because I know better than you" or "because I say so" no longer convince them. But Biblical norms and values do hold true to believing learners, and they are usually willing to subject themselves to them.

These norms must, however, always be presented to learners by means of Christian love, and not legalistically. The learners will then be inspired to consciously apply these values to themselves and organise their own lives accordingly.

The forming of a learner's conscience

A person's conscience is a typical human characteristic by way of which a person innately knows that what he or she is doing is right or wrong. For example, a girl will feel guilty if she knowingly lies to her teacher about her absence for a test. Learners must learn from a young age to develop a good conscience on various matters. For example, if a boy has never been taught to treat books with respect, his conscience will not trouble him if he scribbles or makes notes in a library book.

In the forming of a learner's conscience, his or her parents, friends and particularly also the teacher play a key role. Christian teachers must consciously demonstrate to their learners what it means to be reliable, hard-working and loyal while being forgiving, loving and peaceable at the same time.

A learner adopts these qualities in part in response to the example set by his or her teacher(s). A colleague related that she developed her ability to care for learners with learning difficulties from her Grade 4 teacher. The example set by that teacher changed her life forever.

Not everyone's conscience is necessarily in accordance with what God commands in his Word. In certain cultures, for example, it is ethically acceptable for a man to beat his wife. Justification of such conduct is unthinkable to Christians since a believer's conscience makes him conduct himself in accordance with God's Spirit and Word. Children of the Lord cannot blatantly and purposely contravene the Father's will without being troubled by their conscience.

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul confirmed that God's Spirit testifies together with their spirit that they are children of God. (Romans 8:1-11) The teaching given in God's Word instils itself into our conscience to be able to distinguish between right and wrong. Christian teachers who realise this take the trouble to hold up and clarify God's Word to

their learners. Learners thereby develop a good conscience that will trouble them if they conduct themselves in contravention with the will of God.

For consideration

Divide into groups of four persons in discussing the following questions:

1. How do you deal with a two-year-old who appears to consciously refuse to sit still when you are reading from the Word?
1. How would you answer an adolescent who argues that morality is based on human thinking about affairs and is thus of no value to believers?

Chapter 2.4

The forming of learners in practice

Objectives

Forming learners' thinking is no easy task, because society exerts an influence on their thinking in many ways. Christian teachers thus have to work hard to form their learners into obedient followers of Jesus Christ, realising their dependence on the Lord for the necessary wisdom and that their learners are in God's hand.

The development of learners to their full potential

Some parents expect their children to achieve something they themselves never got the opportunity. For example, a parent once told the personnel at a particular school that his daughter had to attain 95% in Mathematics because she would one day have to go and study medicine. Even though the girl was a below average learner, her father had no doubt that she would one day become a medical doctor.

Such parents are often convinced that it is the responsibility of the teachers to ensure that their children achieve well. And thus, if a learner's achievement does not meet the parent's expectations, it is the teacher's fault for not explaining the problems well enough or not knowing how to work with learners. Such parents find it difficult to understand that their children do not necessarily have the ability to achieve the targets that they (the parents) set for them.

Certain schools play on these parental expectations in their marketing strategies for the purpose of recruiting learners to the school. Slogans such as "The school where every learner is a winner" or "The school where everybody reaches their full potential" are commonly encountered. School communities that strive for this type of objective are usually very achievement-driven. Success is measured by the learner's ability to rise above the rest in one or another field.

It can happen, too, that Christian parents and/or teachers suggest that the Lord expects learners to achieve. Consequently learners who do not wish to sing in the choir or participate in sports are faulted for failing to develop their God-given talents as desired. In all of this, either a parent or teacher or both may become over-determined in regards to the particular field or specialization he or she believes a learner should be focusing on.

Christian teachers must not allow themselves to be misled by such worldly views garnished with a Christian sauce. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that the Lord expects a learner to excel at athletics or achieve six distinctions in Grade 12. What the Bible rather teaches is

that children must learn to apply their gifts to the honour of the Lord and in service of their fellow people. This is what the Lord calls upon every learner to do, and it is in this sense that Christian teachers must equip their learners. (Romans 12)

Learners must strive to achieve their "full potential" not in view of human measurements of achievement but according to the Biblical norms. Then they will want to glorify God through their singing or do their best academically, in order to qualify for an occupation or position wherein they can be of service to their fellow people and thereby also to God.

Holistic Christian development

One of the Jewish teachers of the law, a Pharisee, once asked Jesus what he regarded as the greatest command. Jesus answered him by saying that one must not only love the Lord with all one's heart, body, soul and mind, but also one's fellow people as oneself. (Matthews 22, Mark 12)

The answer Jesus gave to the Pharisee compels every Christian teacher to critically examine his or her own conduct towards the learners. Does your instruction testify to teaching your learners that they are called to love God with their entire being and serve Him alone, or do you just deal with the syllabus as prescribed by the authorities?

Loving the Lord with one's mind may sound somewhat strange to many teachers. Isn't faith actually a feeling or experience? The Lord teaches us something about this in his Word. Learners must also learn from a young age to love Him with their minds.

Teachers give effect to this command by enabling their learners to see God's hand in all things, including in their own subject area. For example, by pointing out God's caring hand in history, learners gain an understanding of how the Lord rules over all things, including their own lives. This counters some people's conviction that faith and everyday life have nothing to do with each other.

To Christian teachers, the entire child – and thus also his or her body – is important. Learners must be taught from a young age that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and must thus be well taken care of. Instruction in this respect starts right from Day One when learners are encouraged to eat healthy, and this continues throughout their entire school careers.

For example, teachers must provide learners with ongoing guidance regarding how to dress neatly. Although this does not form part of the formal school curriculum, the physical forming of learners and their conduct is important to Christian teachers.

The Lord also expects Christian teachers to demonstrate to their learners what it means to serve the Lord with a warm heart. Teachers should not make the mistake of imaging that they can bluff their learners. Learners are able to see in a teacher's eyes and conduct if he or she is excited to serve the Lord, or if he or she only serves Him facetiously.

A Christian teacher who lives in obedient relation to God inspires his or her learners to also serve the Lord. Through such teachers, learners see and become familiar with what it means to serve the Lord joyfully with all one's heart. Such a teacher is a light on a stand that lets his or her light shine so that all can see it and glorify God for it. (Matthew 5:15)

Your soul determines who you are, your life's breath, the entire purpose of your existence. If teachers demonstrate through their conduct that things have value only in obedience to and honour of God, they teach their learners to serve God with all that is in them. (e.g. Psalm 103) Then the learner's heart, body, soul and mind form a unity through which they live out their faith in practice.

It is not correct to place excessive emphasis on one single aspect, such as learners' academic or physical development. All the talents in a learner's life must rather be developed in relation to each other, so that they are able to put their entire life in the service of the Lord.

Forming learners to accept responsibility

Parents are sometimes accused of over-protecting their children, while other parents neglect their children. Teachers can also be guilty of such conduct. Even though it is well meant, the over-protection or neglect of learners prevents them from growing from the "milk" to the "solid food" stage. (Hebrews 5:12 – 6:2)

Teachers who over-facilitate learners' homework or provide them with the answers to a test or exam in advance are doing nobody a favour. It hampers learners' growth to independence.

On the other hand, teachers who mentally write off a certain group of learners because, despite repeated warnings, they are still disinclined to work, are guilty of neglecting those learners. No teacher may decide that he or she has now had enough of his or her learners and thereby ignore the Lord's command to educators.

However difficult it might be, teachers must at all times engage with the interests of every learner. The Lord sets the complete example for us in this. Even though we may sin against his commands every day, He remains merciful. The same attitude must be clearly apparent in the way Christian teachers interact with and handle their learners.

Guiding learners towards independence is no easy task. Teachers must know when learners are ready to take responsibility for certain tasks. The Grade 1 teacher initially puts bookmarks in the learners' books, but later they must learn to do it themselves. Pupils must then learn to write down their homework themselves, start to study independently, and increasingly come to accept responsibility for their conduct.

This comprises more than just the formal school work. For example, teachers must teach boys how to conduct themselves towards girls. And then comes the stage when learners must be given the opportunity to apply in practice what they have been taught. For example, senior learners must have the opportunity to socialise with learners of the opposite sex. When the time arrives for learners to begin bearing responsibility for their own conduct as adults, the teacher must consciously begin to stand back.

Guided confrontation

It is sometimes difficult for teachers to determine what the learners should be exposed to, and what they should withhold from their learners. For example, is it wise that the learners read a secular storybook, or must all prescribed books have a Christian ethos? On the other hand, teachers must guard against coming across as unworldly. To read the life story of a Greek philosopher as a prescribed book for Grade 5 learners will definitely be counter-productive, but doing so might be productive for learners in Grade 11.

It requires a discerning mind and often many hours of research to determine what teaching material is suitable for specific groups of learners. Learners' ages and levels of development clearly play important roles in how such decisions are made. There is no sense in telling learners in Grade 1 of the various world religions, but in later years it is important that learners should know about them, and how to think about them in the light of God's Word.

Similarly, teachers must determine when the time is ripe to discuss matters such as sexual relationships and addictive substances with their learners. Questions such as 'Does God exist?' or 'How do we know that God is real?' are also important to get learners to think about and try to formulate an answer to. These and related topics should not be ignored, but must be discussed with pupils at the right time, against the backdrop of the Bible.

The Lord makes it clear in his Word that we must live in the world but not be of the world. What this means in practice is that teachers must not leave their learners unable to take up their place in the world, on the one hand, while simultaneously teaching them to distinguish themselves from the world, on the other. Learners must be able to identify bad influences and resist them by way of the Word and in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Dealing with the theory of evolution in Life Sciences can serve as an example. There is little sense in simply omitting the portion about evolution from the syllabus. Teachers must rather equip learners to evaluate the theory on the basis of faith as well as scientifically. By not shying away from this and similar matters, but rather guiding learners to fairly assess them in the light of the Scriptures, teachers equip their learners to live as believers in a crippled and distorted world.

For consideration

Develop a slogan for yourself that will motivate you to give the necessary attention to the Christian-holistic development of your learners. Pin it up somewhere where you will be able to see it regularly.

What is the difference between "your God-given potential" and qualifying yourself for a life of service?

Chapter 2.5

Learning and behavioural challenges

Objectives

The consequences of sin are clearly discernible in learners' acts and behaviour – in that which they do and there where they fall short. Christian teachers should know how to properly guide learners, not merely for their own benefit, but especially to equip them to make a meaningful contribution to the expansion of God's kingdom on earth.

Emotional pressure on learners

More often than not, learners find themselves under a lot of pressure. At times they must write more than one test per day and, in addition, hand in all sorts of assignments. On the sports field and/or in the cultural and social arena too, learners are expected to participate and achieve so as not to remain behind their fellow learners.

For some learners the emotional pressure may become too much, and they may come to a point of giving up. For example, in one such case the leading girl of a school committed suicide after she became overwhelmed by the expectations of others.

Christian teachers must guard against placing unnecessary pressure on their pupils. They must bear in mind, for example, that primary school learners are still children and hence do not need to act or achieve like adults. They ought to consciously refrain from overwhelming their learners with so much homework that they have no time to play and relax.

Christian teachers appreciate that learners' academic progress is not the only important aspect in the forming of their lives. As the book of Ecclesiastes clearly teaches, children must also be given time to enjoy their youthful years before the Lord. (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

Positively phrased, educators must teach their learners from a young age that there is a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8): a time to pay attention in the classroom, but also a time to relax during break. Learners must also know how to say no to things.

For example, there is a point when they have spent enough time studying or completing homework tasks. They must know that saying no to something – whether trying to perfect a school project even more, or participating in yet another extramural activity – does not mean that they are opposed to something. What it does mean is that they need to prioritize certain things over others at particular times – and learn how to do so.

In that light, learners must also be able to observe from their teacher's conduct what it means to be "satisfied". Christian teachers indicate their satisfaction when learners have performed a certain task to the best of their abilities, and the teachers refrain from continuously shifting the goalposts a little bit higher. This not only places unnecessary emotional pressure on learners, but also prevents them from gaining a feeling of accomplishment.

Learners with learning problems

Every school has a number of learners who find it difficult to achieve academically. Most of these pupils do have the intellectual ability to make good progress, but are reluctant to engage themselves fully in their schoolwork. Boys, particularly in their early adolescence (13 – 16 years), tend to focus on other things rather than their schoolwork.

For such learners in particular, but also those who do apply themselves more generally, it is important to realise that their task in life does not commence only when they enter the occupational world.

Even when still in school, the Lord calls upon them to prepare themselves for adult life. Christian teachers will regularly encourage learners to focus on their futures, and to faithfully apply themselves to their schoolwork with the future in mind.

In most schools too, there will be learners who struggle to keep up with the nature and scale of the work prescribed in the syllabus. Even though they do their best, such learners find it difficult to meet the prescribed standards. At the same time, teachers may struggle to accept that some learners may not be able to master certain concepts or formulae, despite patient attention to and work with the learners concerned.

This raises the question of the extent to which teachers carry responsibility for their learners' educational progress. It is obvious to Christian teachers that schools must accommodate learners with diverse talents and abilities. All form part of Christ's body (the faith community) and must thus be welcomed with open arms by Christian schools for the great variety of talents and abilities which learners display as part and parce of the beauty and richness of God's creation.

In Paul's epistle to the Corinthians we find an important pointer for life in general, which also speaks well to the subject of Christian education. Paul emphasizes that members of Christ's body (believers) who seem to be less honourable must be treated with more honour. (1 Corinthians 12: 23)

In educational terms, this means that learners who find it difficult to progress must nevertheless be treated with respect, or be treated with respect all the more. An expression like "You are too stupid to understand this" ought never to see the light of day, and even a suggestion like "This is above your level" ought to be avoided in favour of "Let me help you".

Christian teachers must thus guard against blindly following worldly standards, or, in their zeal to maintain high academic standards, against moving away from the Biblical mission to

protect the "lambs". This does not mean that there aren't learners for whom it will be better and more enriching to be enrolled in a special needs school, but only for learners with special learning disabilities in need of a special form of education.

Discrimination and stereotyping

Discrimination and stereotyping are common occurrences in schools. For example, learners will only play with particular classmates at break, or they prefer to work on a school project with certain classmates rather than with others. These forms of discrimination may occur on a natural basis without the other learners thereby being disadvantaged.

However, if a learner or group of learners' words and/or behaviour harms another person or group, it qualifies as unfair discrimination and must be addressed immediately. Christian learners (and even teachers) can very easily make themselves guilty of one or another form of discrimination. Think for example of racist jokes, which relegate specific population groups to inferior levels or portray them as considering themselves as superior. By so doing, you deprive such persons of their humanity.

Christian teachers must ensure that learners don't consciously denigrate other learners by, for example, spreading gossip, or unconsciously by displaying a negative attitude. Point out to your learners that God created all people, and furthermore, that all people – the learners themselves, too – sin against Him every day. No person has reason to pride him- or herself before God; all stand in need of Christ's forgiveness.

Learners who realise this will not look down upon other learners or regard themselves as elevated above the rest. Christian teachers must also exemplify what it means to make God's saving grace one's own, as Jesus conducted himself with love towards all people. Teach your learners to bear in mind the interests of others, rather than negatively stereotyping each other in a racist or sexist manner.

Misuse of substances

The misuse of alcohol, drugs and other addictive substances is a problem that unfortunately also raises its head at Christian schools. I remember, for example, how upset certain parents were when it came to light that some of their children had consumed a few drinks while on a sports tour. While this might seem like innocent teenage fun, there lies great danger in it.

Many learners smoke or drink initially just for the fun or daring of it, but before long it becomes an addictive habit they have difficulty in overcoming. Where initially their bodies don't easily handle the nicotine, alcohol or drugs, soon enough they struggle to function without one or more of these substances.

The mistake that many Christian teachers often make is to pretend that the problem doesn't exist, or to believe that it is something the parents should rather deal with. But even though parental involvement is of cardinal importance, this does not absolve teachers of their responsibilities towards their pupils.

Teachers must, first of all, ensure that their own conduct is appropriate as a preventive measure. There is no point in warning your learners about alcohol abuse if your own behaviour contradicts your words. Further, it is necessary to regularly speak with your learners about making the right choices in life.

Learners must learn that when faced with a choice, they must order their lives according to Biblical norms and values. Then they are less likely to harm their own lives or those of others through improper conduct.

Firm but loving action must be taken against learners who make themselves guilty of such conduct. They must know that such behaviour contravenes the will of the Lord, and that they therefore need to refrain from it. In cases where learners refuse to abstain from their wrongful conduct, it might even be necessary to expel them. The interests of the transgressor may never be placed ahead of the well-being of his or her fellow learners.

Bullying

Bullying consists of hurting someone with your actions or words, or forcing someone to do something against his or her will. Bullying occurs in certain schools more commonly than in others. It depends largely on how seriously the school principal and teachers address the problem.

Bullying is the consequence of the broken world in which we live. The Lord expects us to have each other's interests at heart, but humankind is generally inclined to do exactly the opposite.

For example, many learners find it difficult to distinguish between teasing and bullying. They think they are just making a clever joke or engaging in some good-natured teasing, and only later realise that they actually offended or hurt the other person. There are some who deliberately belittle or physically hurt other learners. In so doing, the bully harms not only his victim, but also the group and himself.

To the Christian teacher, any form of bullying is unacceptable. It directly contravenes God's command to love one's neighbour as oneself. It is important to discuss with your learners how they should conduct themselves towards each other.

They need to learn to decide for themselves which conduct is acceptable and which is not, but it is also good to guide them in this regard. In this way the learners become sensitized to how they should interact with their schoolmates, both the ones they tend to be closer to and those they do not typically hang out with.

Firm action must be taken against learners who nevertheless offend or hurt other learners. Call the offender aside and point out to him or her that he or she is directly contravening God's law. In cases where it is necessary to punish a learner, the offender can be withdrawn from the group for a while, since they often thrive on the attention their schoolmates give them due to their conduct.

Obviously Christian teachers must guard themselves against bullying their learners, or one or another learner, too. This happens when teachers misuse their position of authority by making degrading comments such as "You are pathetic" or physically belittling pupils, for example by pulling their hair.

Teachers who make themselves guilty of such conduct are not adhering to the Lord's Word that self-control is one of the fruits of his Spirit. Christian teachers may never lose sight of the fact that they represent God's image to their learners.

For consideration

Discuss the following points in group context:

1. How can Christian teachers be aware of what is happening in their learners' lives?
2. When is it necessary to permanently expel a learner from a school due to his or her misconduct?
3. How can bullying be prevented?

Chapter 2.6

Evaluation, achievement and reward

Objectives

The evaluation of learners is often a controversial affair. What one person regards as a good achievement, is not necessarily so in another's eyes. It is thus important that teachers acquaint themselves thoroughly with the norms regarding this as revealed in Scripture.

Evaluation as an essential part of education

Teachers take decisions every day which are based on their own evaluation of the matters at hand. This also enables them to adapt and improve their teaching and learning strategies. The assessment that takes place comprises a lot more than simply writing a formal test or exam as a means of evaluating learners' knowledge and comprehension.

Informal evaluation plays an equally great role; it is as important as formal evaluation methods. This includes aspects such as establishing whether a learner is paying attention during a lesson, or whether he or she needs more emotional or other support.

It is clear from Scripture that the Lord both knows and assesses each and every person. (Psalm 139) In the letters to the seven churches recorded in the book of Revelation, the churches are called to account by the Lord. The same principle applies today. Every person, including a teacher, must give account of his or her behaviour and acts, including where he or she might have gone wrong.

Are you fulfilling your responsibility as a teacher to carefully observe your learners' conduct? And how do you evaluate how the "inexperienced" young fellow teachers distinguish between right and wrong? Responsible teachers take note when matters arise that need to be rectified.

The Scriptures warn that no one may judge another's intentions. No teacher is able to view a learner's heart and see with certainty what his or her intentions are. Take great care, thus, before judging, because you are judged by the measure by which you judge others.

Remarks such as "It is clear to me that you don't want to serve the Lord" or "You are a child of Satan" may not be expressed by any teacher – even if a learner has committed a serious contravention. Judge the deed, but guard against judging the intentions of a child or youth in a moment of anger. It is for the Lord alone to make such judgements.

Considerations in evaluation

Christian teachers must seriously consider what they wish to achieve through the evaluation of their learners. The determining factor must be the norms God has established in his Word, and not simply current national practices or pressure from parents.

For example, although parents sometimes believe so, evaluation does not have the purpose of elevating certain learners' achievements above those of the rest of the class. The point of evaluation is rather to test whether the task of education is succeeding in its God-given purpose.

Like the young Timothy, teachers must also establish by way of evaluation at which point it is necessary to punish or simply to caution a learner. Incorrect views must be countered. Learners who make themselves guilty of bad language must be punished, and those who misuse or neglect their talents need to be cautioned.

Effective evaluation based on Biblical norms enables Christian teachers to do the following:

- Determine the extent to which they are succeeding in their purpose to equip the children with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes. Are the correct curricula being applied in the correct manner? What adaptations can be made to improve the quality of the education?

For example, it might be necessary for a Life Sciences teacher to employ a variety of methods of instruction to awaken learners' appreciation of God's creation.

- Establish the extent to which learners are making progress in relation to their God-given abilities.

For example, are learners learning to perceive the talents that they have received from God and applying them in his service? In a subject such as Life Orientation, teachers must determine, among other things, whether learners are actually applying that which they have learnt in theory. For example, do the learners display the correct attitude toward persons with disabilities?

- Provide learners and their parents with a true reflection of a learner's abilities, progress, conduct and attitude. This enables the learner and his or her parents to identify and, where necessary, address their strong and weak points.

For example, learners might realise on the grounds of the teacher's evaluation that they will need to work harder if they wish to embark upon a certain direction of study.

Each learner must be evaluated in his or her totality as a person. Not only academic, sport or leadership achievements must be evaluated, but also learners' development in the social, cultural and religious spheres. The growth of a learner's faith is never a matter of

insignificance. There is no point in a learner achieving well academically if he or she is not also growing in faith.

It is, however, not easy to give the necessary attention to all of these aspects. Dedication is required to determine a learner's views about persons of a different population group, or about the attainment of well-being. To a Christian teacher, a learner's total forming is of great importance and thus deserves a commensurate level of attention.

Various levels of evaluation

Based on Christian principles, learners must be evaluated on three levels:

- Firstly, factually: Teachers must ensure that learners have mastered the factual content that is being dealt with. In dealing with World War II, for example, learners must know which countries were involved, also in Africa, and be aware of the main battles that took place.
- Secondly, in regards to learners' understanding of particular events: Teachers must establish whether their learners are able to see the linkages between various events and to interpret them correctly. In the study of World War II, for example, the teacher must establish whether the learners understand the factors that determined the outcome of the war, as well as the situation that followed the conflict.
- Thirdly, in regards to learners' ability to assess problems and different viewpoints for themselves: The teacher must also evaluate learners' normative judgements of the curricula and their personal reaction to them. For example, how do the learners view the immense loss of life that occurred in World War II – and whether the use of nuclear weapons was justified?

Even though it is difficult to measure learners' personal reactions to particular subjects, teachers need and indeed should not avoid thorny issues. It is not necessary to provide supportive evidence for every mark that is awarded.

A test or exam question may thus include a question like: "Name something that you learnt about God's nature in your study." You can even put the "why" type of question to older learners. A question like: "Why did the Lord allow so many people to lose their lives during World War II?" can help the learners to think in greater depth about the existence of God or the struggle between God and Satan. These and comparable questions can be freely asked, because they touch on the core of Christian education.

Achievement

A characteristic of Christian education is that it bears fruit. Teachers may and must thus pray to the Lord to confirm the work they are doing. If the learners fare well in a test or successfully complete a difficult assignment, one is thankful to the Lord for the fruit of the

task that He gave you. Good achievements may, however, never lead to some learners perceiving themselves as somehow being 'better' than others.

Without realising it, a teacher can very easily contribute to such a situation. This happens if he or she makes a fuss of the top academic achievers' results whilst concurrently forgetting that other learners worked just as hard or even harder as the high achievers. Guard also against entrusting certain tasks, like the conveying of messages between teachers, only to the top achievers. This can easily send a message that the top-achieving learners are more valued than the rest of the class.

It is important to bear in mind that learners' value is not determined by their achievements. The captain of the first team has no more value than the learners who do not do quite as well on the sports field. The learners' value lies, rather, in what the Lord gave them and what He calls them to do with it.

A teacher who realises that his or her learners are God's children will always have due regard for their personal value. Such teachers identify every learner's unique gifts and judge their achievements on that basis. To one learner, a 50% mark on a spelling test can be a big achievement, where to another learner an 80% mark on the same test is a poor performance. Learners who do what the Lord expects of them in accordance with their talents, are achievers in their own right. Such learners, too, should receive recognition for their work.

Rewards

The recognition and granting of awards for learners' achievements is a controversial matter. Not everyone necessarily attaches the same value to a certain achievement, and this often leads to serious differences of opinion, particularly on merit evenings. In one such case, three fathers were each convinced that their son should receive the "Sportsman of the Year" award.

The first father's son had received national colours in fishing, and to him it was clear that the granting of national colours had to supersede all other sporting achievements.

The second father believed that fishing was not a sport, and that his son, who had received provincial colours in football, should receive the award.

The third father's son did not receive provincial colours in any sport, but he represented the school in five different sporting codes. To him, the versatility of his son ought to be the determining factor in awarding the trophy.

Whatever the outcome, two parents would be aggrieved by the decision of the panel.

Fortunately the Bible provides clear guidelines that a teacher can use to reward different learners. In the parable of the talents, all three persons received a number of talents from their employer. Those who did well in multiplying the talents entrusted to them, received the same reward. Both were praised for the good and faithful work that they performed because they did their best. (Matthew 25:14-30)

It thus revolved around the inputs that they made, not so much the outcomes that they achieved. Many teachers are, however, inclined to act in precisely the opposite way. Learners who achieved 90% on a test are praised, while those who got less than 50% tend to be criticised without the teacher taking note of the effort made by those who received lower marks.

The effect in practice is that those who received many talents from the Lord are rewarded with a number of trophies on merit evenings, while those who perhaps worked harder but who received fewer talents from the Lord, receive no recognition. This is not fair, and the practice should really be terminated.

Rather reward every learner who did his or her homework faithfully and who put in a lot of effort in preparing for a test in a suitable manner. Then it won't revolve around the outcome that the learner achieved, but rather on whether he or she worked faithfully in the light of his or her calling in service of the Lord.

For consideration

Think critically about the amount of time that you devote to the following activities. Where can you possibly improve?

1. Do you spend time evaluating your learners' emotional well-being?
2. Do you provide your learners with sufficient feedback after having evaluated them?
3. To what extent is your evaluation instrument or method suitable in regards to that which you intend to evaluate?

Chapter 2.7

Order and discipline

Objectives

The Lord expects parents and teachers to educate their children and learners by way of discipline and admonition. In cases of learners who have made themselves guilty of misconduct, Christian teachers must therefore be familiar with the measures via which such learners must be called to order.

Disciplinary problems are characteristic of humankind

No teacher can claim that he or she has never experienced disciplinary problems in class. Learners are by nature sinful, and thus they will sometimes make themselves guilty of misconduct. This wrongful conduct can vary from a rebellious boy who challenges authority to a model learner who takes the opportunity to act with disrespect towards a teacher.

Christian teachers must take their learners' sinful nature into account. They ought not to be surprised even if exemplary learners contravene the school rules.

This was the case when a final year boy said to a lady who had come to speak to the principal about her child: "Good morning Aunt Witch (the nickname of an excessively made-up TV personality)!" Even though her black dress and make-up could be said to have been a bit overdone, this was definitely not a good remark to make. Unfortunately homework that is not done, rowdiness in class and the bullying of other learners and/or their parents are problems that regularly occur everywhere.

Societal trends have ensured that today's teachers are experiencing ever more disciplinary problems. For example, single parents and parents who both work find it difficult to give enough attention to their children, which can easily lead to disciplinary problems. Grade 1 teachers can testify that many learners find it difficult to sit still when other people are speaking. And some high school learners feel themselves so "high and mighty" that they expect teachers to adapt to their ways of looking at life.

In extreme cases, some parents even encourage their children to reject a teacher's authority. There was a case where a parent informed the school in writing that he had given his son permission to no longer attend a certain teacher's class. Although it was clear that the school could not tolerate such conduct, the boy was well aware that his father had justified his disobedience of one of his teachers.

Being a teacher is no easy task today. Some teachers are even leaving the profession simply because they see no further purpose in working with such undisciplined learners. In one case a newly qualified teacher left after only a couple of weeks, after having been bitten on the cheek by a learner.

This does not imply that all teachers experience an equal number of problems. Some teachers have the ability to maintain discipline more effectively than their colleagues. In some schools there are also still good disciplinary structures in place that help to maintain order.

However, this exempts no teacher from ever experiencing problems. Fortunately, Christian teachers are able to view the situation from a different perspective. Although they have to deal with such cases every day, they look beyond them and see the Lord who has called them to work in his service.

Teachers' duty to maintain discipline

The word "discipline" is closely related to the word "disciple", which means being a willing follower. In Christian education, the immature learners are led by their believing teachers to become willing followers of Jesus Christ.

Because effective Bible-based education can take place only if good order and structure are maintained in a school, teachers must act strictly against those who disrupt their teaching. One poorly disciplined learner cannot be allowed to prevent the rest of the learners from learning about the great deeds of God. In other words, a believing History teacher needs to act firmly with learners who sit and chat while he is revealing the hand of God in history to the class.

Teachers who realise that they are instructing their learners on behalf of God, will not be afraid to discipline learners when necessary. God gives them not only the command, but also the mandate to maintain his law.

No teacher may thus close his or her eyes to a learner who is guilty of misconduct – and whether something negative unfolds in the classroom or on the playground makes no difference. Boys and girls who act disrespectfully must most certainly be reprimanded and, if necessary, punished. Remember, however, that the methods of punishment used ought to lead learners back to the Lord.

There are times when teachers become despondent about a specific learner when all encouragement, warnings and disciplinary procedures have no effect on his or her conduct. Christian teachers may however never make themselves guilty of this. Just as the Lord walks onward with every one of us, so teachers need to do with their learners.

No teacher may decide for him- or herself who the Lord wishes to walk with or not. He calls whom He wishes, when He wishes and where He wishes. Teachers are merely instruments in his hand, ordinary people who give effect to his will by their instruction.

Every teacher must thus continue to admonish, punish and encourage, however difficult this may be. Experienced teachers can often tell of learners who they suspected might not end up doing well, but who yet became fine Christian adults living out their calling in different sectors of society.

Various approaches

Not all teachers take the same approach to applying discipline. In some schools, a strict code of conduct is applied in which all contraventions as well as consequent punishments are clearly set out. For example, boys' hair may not be too long, or all learners must carry their satchels in their right hand during class rotation.

Proponents of such a system believe that the certainty of such regulations contributes to learner security. They are also convinced of the value of learners sometimes learning to obey rules, simply for the sake of the rules. Thereby they also teach unconditional obedience to the Lord.

In contrast, other teachers believe that one should not belabour learners with a heavy body of rules. Learners should rather come to realise what is right and wrong by way of discussing proper and improper conduct as specific situations or problems arise.

Rules should be restricted to a minimum, and punishment applied only in exceptional cases. The proponents of this approach are convinced that learners will thereby learn to serve the Lord through conviction, rather than by compulsion.

Neither of these approaches can be regarded as ideal from a Biblical point of view. Teachers who think that learners will come to realise what is right and wrong of their own accord don't necessarily take into account their learners' sinful nature.

The pressure on teachers to work through the curriculum makes it impossible for them to discuss every incident with the learners. It is, however, important to impress upon the learners that obedience to the rules should be a matter of inner conviction, not of the fear of punishment.

In schools that apply a strict disciplinary policy, it can also easily happen that learners who contravene the rules are dealt with by the "policy" and not by the teacher. In such cases, the policy deprives the personnel of the opportunity to serve as stewards in service of the Lord and in guiding learners in the right direction.

Biblical guidelines

Throughout Scripture we find guidelines that help to clarify how teachers ought to handle learners who are guilty of misconduct. (e.g. Ephesians 4:25) These guidelines include, among others, the following:

- All disciplinary measures must be applied in love. (Proverbs 13:24) Never may a learner be disciplined in anger or retribution. This applies particularly to learners

who are guilty of serious misconduct. It sometimes helps to wait a day or two, particularly in cases where you yourself are involved.

- The purpose of discipline is always to guide a learner to what is right. (Proverbs 22:15) No teacher may discipline learners as a demonstration of his or her "power".
- Any disciplinary action must take into account the nature and character of the learner concerned, as well as his or her personal circumstances. Teachers may never fall into the habit of punishing all the learners who have not done their homework. A specific learner's home circumstances could have prevented him or her from completing their work at home.
- The punishment meted out to a learner must always be in relation to the transgression. A disobedient boy may not, for example, receive an extra heavy punishment simply because the teacher doesn't like him.
- A learner who has unknowingly transgressed a rule may not receive the same punishment as one who has done so deliberately. The extent to which learners display remorse for one or another transgression must also be taken into account in determining an appropriate punishment.

Before disciplining any learner, it is important and often beneficial to assess one's own feelings and role. In some cases a teacher's own conduct might have been a contributory factor in a learner's transgressing the rules. For example, it would be unwise to punish learners who arrive late for class if you yourself regularly arrive late. After all, the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:12) warns that you should not set the wrong example to your learners by way of your own conduct.

The maintenance of discipline in practice

The mandate that Christian teachers receive from the Lord to teach his children brings with it certain responsibilities. It is the responsibility of every teacher to ensure that the instruction that takes place in his or her classroom is well structured.

This implies, for example, that your classroom must always be neat and tidy, that you are well prepared for every lesson, and that learners know what is expected of them. You must stimulate the interests of the learners so that they actively participate in your lessons.

Teachers who do this motivate a sound work culture among their learners, and furthermore reduce the possibility of learners falling into misconduct. It is not for nothing that the proverb tells us that the devil finds work for idle hands.

Action must be taken against learners who misbehave. The action can vary from a moment's silence until everyone is paying attention, fixing your eyes firmly on a learner who is not paying attention, or addressing yourself directly to learners who are not

behaving respectfully. In serious cases or after repeated transgressions, learners must receive an appropriate punishment.

For example, could it be suspension, expulsion, a specific task that a learner who is guilty of misconduct must carry out? The following two questions can help you decide on a suitable punishment:

- Who am I punishing?
- What am I punishing?

Every punishment should come coupled with a discussion, so that the learner gains insight and understanding into why he or she deserves the punishment. Point out to the learner concerned that you are acting in his or her (or their) best interests by dealing with the matter in love. Teachers who don't punish transgressors are doing nobody a favour. One day they will be called to account over their lack of action.

For consideration

Discuss the following points in group context:

1. The advantages and disadvantages of a formal disciplinary policy, both in general and in relation to the school where you are teaching.
2. What punishment is appropriate for learners who repeatedly make themselves guilty of misconduct?

Chapter 2.8

Preparation for adulthood

Objectives

In their later adult lives, learners are bound to face important questions and encounter challenges. These may include aspects such as choosing the right life partner, the choice of an occupation and/or their community involvement. Although these aspects don't form part of the school's prescribed curriculum, Christian teachers must take the trouble to equip their learners to face these challenges from a Biblical vantage point.

Fully equipped as a Christian believer

Christian parents don't send a brain to school to be taught by the teachers. They send a child. They do so in the expectation that the school will help shape and form the learners and equip them for full adulthood. "Full" here meaning: not in the sense of being without sin, but in faithfully searching to do God's will.

For Christian parents, learners and teachers, a school is thus far more than just an academic institution that provides intellectual preparation for children's later lives. Much more significantly, a Christian school prepares learners to live in obedience to the Lord in all spheres of life.

To educate learners to live obediently requires dedicated prayer and ongoing hard work. Learners must learn from the Bible and through their parents, the church and their teachers what it means to serve the Lord here and now in everything. This includes their family life, the marketplace, their socialising during a barbeque or other event and their personal free time activities.

For teachers who serve as instruments in the service of the Lord, equipping their learners to serve the Lord in all the spheres of their adult lives is a great challenge, but also a rewarding one.

To be a man or woman

The secular world in which we live today no longer believes in the creational order that God established between men and women. Women are encouraged to think for themselves as being the "same" as men in all facets of society, and even homosexual marriages have become common.

The same tendency is discernible in many schools. Girls have increasingly come to take part in sporting activities such as football and wrestling, which formerly were practised only by boys, and in many schools there is little or no distinction between boys' and

girls' schoolwear.

These and other similar practices have the effect that boys generally no longer know what the Lord expects of them as men, nor girls what the Lord expects of them as women.

Teachers must demonstrate to the learners through their conduct how Christian men and women should conduct themselves. Some men find it difficult to maintain order, and women who act in an unfeminine way, definitely don't set a good example to the learners. Teachers must thus speak regularly with their learners about the way in which men and women should conduct themselves towards each other.

The choice of a life partner

One of the most important decisions a person can make is that of choosing a life partner. Christian teachers thus take the trouble to prepare their learners from a young age for this choice. It is good for primary school teachers to encourage their learners, even from a young age, to acquire the habit of praying for their future life partners, even though they have no idea who that person will be. Thereby they learn that a good life partner is a gift from the Lord.

Make use, also, of free minutes during the day to speak with the learners about Christian love. Point out to them the difference between what the media portrays as love and Jesus Christ's sacrificial love on the cross. Learners must know what it means when the Lord compares marriage between a man and his wife with the relation between Him and his church.

As with the prayer for our daily bread (care) in the Lord's Prayer, learners must also learn that the prayer for the right life partner requires "work". Like our daily bread, the right life partner does not simply fall into one's lap out of the sky. Christian teachers can thus also help the learners on a personal level to prepare for their future marriages. They can do this by way of:

- Explaining to the learners that, while it is important to take care of their appearance, they should avoid placing excessive emphasis on it.
- Teaching both boys and girls what tasks a man and a woman should perform within marriage. Girls must, for example, learn how to manage the household, while boys can learn to perform all sorts of maintenance tasks, both within and outside of the house.
- Emphasizing to learners the importance of being in the right places where they can meet other young Christian people. It is, for example, better to study at a university with a Christian character than at one where there is no association for Christian

learners.

The value that Christian teachers can add to the life preparedness of their learners is far greater than the factual knowledge they might learn in a certain class on a specific day.

Choice of occupation

Every learner has received certain aptitudes or talents from the Lord that will equip him or her better for one type of work than for another. In the choice of an occupation, many learners attach great value to occupations such as engineer or accountant, which pay high salaries. Lower-paid occupations, such as teacher or nurse, are typically considered less attractive. Such learners misleadingly think that money brings happiness.

Christian teachers must explain to their learners that one gains fulfilment only through doing what the Lord has called one to do. Work is then not a punishment, but a way of life in which one serves the Lord faithfully through one's work. Whether one works as a Christian mechanic, traffic police officer, clerk, medical doctor or whatever else the case may be, as a Christian one does not in the first place work for a salary, but to the honour of God and the well-being of one's neighbours.

The most important way Christian teachers can prepare their learners to make appropriate occupational choices is by setting the right example in respect of their own professional life. Teachers who are forever complaining to their learners about their small salary, difficult working conditions or heavy work load create in their learners the impression that "work" is nothing more than a drudge in order to earn an income.

By contrast, teachers who perform their task with enthusiasm, zeal and dedication demonstrate to their learners that work as such is not the punishment that many people unfortunately believe it to be. Although every occupation has its own problems and challenges (the effect of sin on work) the command prior to the Fall of Man was to work in the service of the Lord.

Christian teachers are sensitive to the gifts their learners have received and ought to encourage them in an informal way to find out more about certain occupations wherein they can apply those gifts. Discussion in this connection can often help learners, not only to identify their own talents, but also to discover occupational possibilities wherein they can devote themselves to a full service ethic.

Be particularly on the lookout for learners with the gifts to become a minister, missionary or teacher. Extra effort can be made with such learners to explain to them the need for competent, well-trained and dedicated workers in God's kingdom. Point out to them the great but glorious task of educating the coming generation in the fear of the Lord.

Community involvement

In Jesus Christ's high-priestly prayer, which appears in the Gospel of John, Jesus prays to his Father not to take the disciples out of the world, but to protect them from the evil one.

Just as the Father sent Jesus Christ to the world, so we too are sent to proclaim God's will in the world through our words and works. (John 17:18)

Christian teachers may thus not educate their learners in an unworldly manner, but must equip them to shine Christian light into this dark world. This does not mean that learners must participate in the sinful enjoyments of the world in order to let God's light shine there. More to the point, learners must – like recruits in an army – be equipped so that, as well-trained soldiers, they can eventually go out and face the battle with the evil one.

As part of equipping their learners, Christian teachers must create opportunities for their more senior learners to get involved in their communities. In the language subjects learners can for example write a letter to a newspaper or other information-sharing medium about one or another controversial matter.

Similarly, Geography learners can tackle an environmental conservation project such as countering erosion or cleaning up a polluted area. In Life Orientation, the teacher can help learners to give practical effect to the values that they have learnt by, for example, giving flowers to the aged in an old age home or collecting canned food for underprivileged children.

By launching such projects, teachers point out to their learners that Christians also have a responsibility towards the communities in which they live. No Christian may serve the Lord in isolation. Learners must learn from a young age to let their light shine in such a way that it can be seen by those around them, and thereby glorify their Father who is in heaven.

For consideration

Think critically about educational matters that don't appear in the prescribed curriculum, but wherein Christian teachers need to help form their learners to live out their calling as followers of Christ.

Draw up plans to tackle a community or welfare project together with your class.

Chapter 2.9

Leadership development

Objectives

For a learner to serve as a leader places a great responsibility on his or her shoulders. Teachers must teach their learners to apply the authority that they have received from God in obedience to Him and in the service of their neighbours.

Different perceptions of leadership

In many countries, schools have a system of school prefects – senior learners in Grade 6 and Grade 11 – with certain leadership responsibilities. The election of prefects is often a stressful event. Election to the so-called student council provides the learner with a certain status, and in many cases it also enhances the parents' standing in the community.

This explains why so many parents are aggrieved if their child is not elected to the student council. For example, a parent demanded that her child be appointed as a prefect because she (the mother) had for many years assisted with the coaching of athletics at the school. After the procedure by which leaders are elected was explained to her, she withdrew herself as athletics coach.

The prefect blazer or class captain badge that a learner receives sometimes brings about a transformation in the recipient. Some learners appreciate the responsibility that goes with the position and perform their task diligently and with humility. To them, it is an honour and privilege to be of service in the school community.

Other learners, by contrast, are very self-satisfied about their newfound status as leaders. They demand unconditional obedience to their wishes and orders, yet see themselves as elevated above the rules. For example, learners who chat during the morning assembly are quickly removed and handed over to the staff, and yet they themselves see no problem exchanging a thought or two with a friend. Such learners believe that a leadership position affords benefits to the leader.

The Bible teaches us to approach leadership in a totally different way. Jesus Christ set the perfect example for us in this. Although He was the Son of God who was worthy of all honour and praise, He actually adopted the position of a servant. He never strove to elevate Himself. In obedience to his Father, He strove instead to promote the well-being of his Father's children. That was precisely why He was glorified by his Heavenly Father.

Teachers must inculcate this same attitude in every learner with a leadership role in the school. Christian leaders do not seek honour for themselves. On the contrary, they provide correct leadership even though this may work to their own disadvantage. The team captain will thus speak firmly to his team members who indulge in alcohol after a good win. As the leader, he or she bears their best interests at heart even though this may make him unpopular with them.

Why school leaders?

The question is sometimes asked whether schools shouldn't rather do away with leadership roles. Is it right to appoint certain learners above others? Shouldn't every learner rather be given the chance to accept self-responsibility for his or her own conduct? Some schools thus do away with leaders, or they grant all users the opportunity to take the leadership on a rotation basis.

It is important from a Christian point of view to develop the leadership capacity of all learners. This is necessary because believers are often expected to take the lead in some or other respect. The father as the head of his family must take the lead in holding home worship, while the mother must take the lead in other aspects of her children's education.

It is also, however, clear from Scripture that the Lord calls certain people to serve as leaders in specific fields. For example, the government receives the command from the Lord to maintain law and order so that the citizens of the country can live in peace. The Lord thus also expects teachers to take the lead in their classrooms in the teaching and education of their learners.

It is not wrong of a school to elect leaders, provided this is done on the correct basis – the rendering of service. Thereby learners learn from a young age not only to lead in service of the Lord, but also to willingly subject themselves to such leadership.

Learners must learn that human authority, even that of a team captain, scholar patrol or library prefect, is founded in the Lord. The apostle Paul makes it clear in his epistle to the Romans (ch 13:1-7) that all authority is instituted by God and therefore must be respected. Isn't someone who thus resists the leadership of a class captain or prefect then not also thereby resisting God?

Teachers must take co-responsibility for the leadership development of their learners. Registry teachers must explain to the class leaders who have been elected what their leadership position means – that their authority is not based on themselves as persons, but in the Lord who placed them in the position of authority. They thus don't apply their own authority, but that of the Lord.

They must also know the extent of their authority. A leader who realises this never prioritises his or her own ideas or interests, but seeks what is right in the eyes of the Lord. Such leaders realise that they will one day have to give account to the Lord for the way in which they led their fellow learners.

The task of Christian leaders at school

The Lord is a God of order. He provides clear guidelines in his Word regarding the way society should be ordered and structured. Every person must know what is expected of him or her, as well as of other persons in the society. This also applies to a school community. For example, a learner may not disadvantage another learner by bullying him or her.

By the same token, no learner may take the possessions (such as homework) of another learner. Since learners are inclined – like all adults – to contravene God's order, teachers (and thereby also school leaders) receive the command to call to order those learners who conduct themselves in a disorderly manner. By thus creating order, all learners can receive their education in peace and quiet without harming each other.

The task of Christian school leaders is thus to help with the creation and maintenance of an orderly school environment, one wherein teaching and learning can take place to best effect in the fear of the Lord. Their tasks include the following:

They must set an exemplary standard to the learners both in and outside of school. It commences at the relatively minor level with something as simple as the leader's appearance. Is the leader's clothing correct for the school or does he or she set a bad example by, for example, wearing rings or jewels which are prohibited by the school rules?

Outside of the school context, leaders must also demonstrate to the learners how to enjoy their youth to the full in service of the Lord. For example, a leader who shouts or swears at the referee definitely does not set the right example. Leaders can serve as a guide to other learners only if what they themselves do is correct.

Action must be taken against learners who do not subject themselves to the rules and regulations of the school. For example, prefects must take learners who misbehave themselves on the playground during break to a teacher so that an appropriate punishment can be applied. Such conduct may however never be done in anger or revenge. The deed and not the character of the person must determine if and how action is taken against the learner concerned.

They must also ensure that all of the learners work well together as a team to achieve set objectives. This usually requires more than just good planning and organisation. They must also be able to motivate their fellow learners to do what is right. Just as the body cannot function properly unless every organ plays its part, so a class or school can function optimally only if everyone contributes their part.

It is beneficial if a school's student council decides to tackle one or another praiseworthy project. For example, learners can collect food for less-privileged persons or launch a project to clean up a neglected area in the community. Such projects provide student leaders with the ideal opportunity not just to develop their own leadership capacity, but also to stimulate the other learners to render service in a positive manner.

Character attributes of leaders

Scripture does not identify one correct leadership style. Sometimes leaders need to act autocratically if they see that other learners are taking the wrong direction in one or another respect. On other occasions, they need to act more democratically by allowing the group to decide for itself, because they appreciate that they are not themselves the recipients of all wisdom and insight from the Lord. It is also not necessary to try and control everything. Unimportant matters can be managed in a less formal manner and left to run their own course.

It is clear from the Bible that leaders must have certain character attributes (e.g. 1 Timothy 3). These attributes must as far as possible be initiated and further developed in a formal manner, but also informally, among school leaders. The character attributes of leaders include the following:

- They don't seek glory for themselves, but remain humble.
- They are prepared to serve the learners, the personnel and the community.
- They are aware of their own and others' shortcomings and faults, and seek to work together with others in rendering their services.
- They are mindful of the well-being of the learners; not merely their own.
- They lead by setting the right example.
- They acknowledge their own shortcomings and faults.
- They are steadfast in their conduct. They know what is right and wrong and are not afraid to stand up for the truth.
- They are always honest. Their yes is yes and their no is no.
- They provide leadership according to fixed norms and values. What is wrong today does not suddenly become right tomorrow.

Christian leaders who have these attributes inspire respect and authority. They are trusted because their integrity is above suspicion. Such leaders accept the leadership responsibilities granted to them by the Lord. They lie awake at night if things are going badly with a learner, and they rejoice if someone else succeeds and achieves.

Such a leader does not push his or her way to the forefront, but is instead prepared to leave the honour to others. The true leader realises that his strength is not seated in himself or herself. They know that they are strong specifically when they are weak. The leader then does not rely on his or her own abilities or good relationships, but completely on the Lord to provide the correct guidance.

For consideration

How does a leader learn to provide the right leadership? In a group, discuss what the Bible brings to the fore on this matter. As examples, look to Moses, Saul, David, Deborah, Miriam, Martha, Solomon, Daniel, Paul, Tabitha, Priscilla, and above all Jesus Christ.

Together with a colleague or two, write an article of less than 120 words on the way in which leadership development should be done on a normative basis at the school where you currently work.

Chapter 2.10

Mutual relationships

Objectives

No learner is alone in the world. Although learners must live in a personal relationship with the Lord, the Lord expects of them to serve Him together with other believers. The way in which learners behave towards others and care for God's creation ought thus to be of great importance to Christian teachers.

Various relationships

Ever since Creation, people have existed in various relationships with each other and the material world. God bound humankind directly to the earth when He formed Adam from the dust of the earth. The Lord also told Adam that it was not good for him to be alone and that He would make him a suitable helpmate. Adam and Eve lived directly in the presence of the Lord in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 1-3)

That is still the case today. Every person, whether or not he or she wishes to acknowledge it, lives in a direct relationship with God, the world He created, and other persons.

In the case of Christians, these relationships form a community of faith in which believers accept co-responsibility for each other's lives and thereby also for the education of their children. This mutual band extends across all national boundaries, ethnicities and times, and is characterised by everyone's link to Jesus Christ, who was appointed by his Father as the head of all things.

For Christian teachers, Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which all education rests. His Word determines learners' relationships and how they should manage them. Learners may thus not be educated in isolation from the world in which they live, but must rather learn to shine like a light in the dark.

The art of involving learners in meaningful relationships and developing them effectively is of the utmost importance to Christian teachers. For example, learners must learn to work in good order with their classmates, but also how to use their time properly. The education that learners receive plays a key role in this. They must learn to live in the world God created, but above all, to dwell with the Lord in a living, constructive relationship.

Good and bad friends

Learners ought to learn from a young age that they must take other persons into consideration. This is highly important, but it can also come with significant challenges. It can happen that learners' sound judgement between right and wrong is influenced by the conduct and views of other learners. Then they no longer act in accordance with Biblical norms and values, but in accordance with what they believe the other learners expect of them.

For example, such learners allow their friends to copy their homework or go along with their friends when they play truant. To counter this and comparable wrongful conduct, teachers need to speak regularly with their learners about the meaning of true friendship and how friends should conduct themselves towards each other.

Teachers must point out to their learners that a good friend can mean a great deal to them, but that the wrong friend can break them. It is not for nothing that the author of Proverbs teaches that friends are like two pieces of iron that hone each other. (Proverbs 27:17)

Learners must learn how important it is that their friends share the same basis of faith as they themselves also adhere to. Such friends don't seek their own interests, but rather influence each other positively in everything they do.

In contrast to the prodigal son whose friends turned out to be fair weather friends (Proverbs 19:4, Luke 15:13-15), teachers must conduct a personal discussion with learners who associate with the wrong types of friends. (Proverbs 16:28) Point out to the learners that true friendship is not a superficial thing, but that friends will always influence each others' thinking and conduct, whether positively or negatively. (Proverbs 27:9)

Teachers must accept that learners will exert pressure on each other. The important thing is how they deal with this pressure. The learners can either submit to the pressure of wrong friends, or they can take a stand against what is wrong and stand up for what is right. Building a constructive attitude among young learners is no easy task. It usually helps if the teacher succeeds in motivating the leaders of the group to establish the right way of thinking among their friends.

It can also be the "in thing" to do the right things! For example, if a learner who smokes notices that everyone thinks he is acting in a childish way, there's a good chance that he will desist from it.

Learners can, similarly, also apply positive peer pressure on learners who habitually swear or misbehave in class. That way, learners learn what it means to have a true friend – and also to be a true friend.

Teachers and other bearers of authority

Chapter 1 focused, among other topics, on how Christian teachers ought to conduct themselves toward their learners. Here, however, our emphasis is on the manner in which learners must conduct themselves toward their teachers and other bearers of authority. How learners relate to their teachers and other bearers of authority is of the utmost importance because thereby they learn what it means to be obedient to and to have respect for the Lord.

Teachers may not function as their learners' playmates or buddies. A primary school teacher who allows a group of girls to hang onto her skirts, or a high school teacher who thinks it is smart if his learners address him by his first name, thereby undermine the position of authority in which God has placed them. In their dealings with learners, Christian teachers must rather set an example of what healthy relationships with authority figures consist of.

It sometimes happens that learners actively challenge a teacher's authority or even act violently towards them. Under no circumstances may a learner who abuses teachers or even physically molests them be tolerated.

Learners who make themselves guilty of such misconduct must be firmly dealt with, and if they do not then refrain from their wrongful conduct, they must be summarily removed from the school. One or two learners may not be the cause of an attitude of disrespect for teachers.

Unfortunately these problems sometimes have their origin in parental homes where parents no longer teach their children to have respect for bearers of authority. In certain cases, parents even encourage their children to make life difficult for their teachers. It is then advisable to arrange a special evening where parents and teachers can together discuss the way learners ought to conduct themselves towards authority figures.

Parents should, for example, not allow their children to speak ill of their teachers at home or play their teachers off against themselves. It is important that parents and teachers realise that effective teaching and learning can take place only in a climate of on-going mutual respect between parents and teachers.

Care for the community

The Lord's command to love your neighbour as yourself extends over all spheres of life. Of course, it commences in learners' parental (or other caregiver) homes where they must live in harmony and love with their parents, siblings and/or others. From there, it extends out to relationships in the immediately surrounding living environment.

It is wonderful if teachers are able to inspire a love for learners' fellow schoolmates or the residents of their suburb. Their love for them must, however, always – like their love for their families – be characterised by an ethic of service. Thereby learners are taught to sanctify all activities that take place at the school to the honour of God.

By contrast, if teachers teach their learners to look down upon other persons or groups, they are not honouring God but misusing what they have received from the Lord in pursuit of their own selfish convictions.

Love for one's neighbour extends further than just one's immediate family, school and community circles. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Lord teaches us to see all people with whom we have dealings as our neighbours and to treat them with loving care.

For example, the way in which teachers discuss other places and peoples plays a major role in how learners will perceive those people. A History teacher who always speaks derogatively of another social group instils a negative attitude in the learners.

By contrast, teachers who pray to God to meet the needs of other persons demonstrate that they also have a responsibility towards those persons. Learners thereby learn to give effect to God's command that Christians must love.

Being faith-based, Christian education bears a special character which it seeks to instil among the learners. The richness of the faith learners learn about, as well as the Biblical knowledge they acquire by way of their Christian education, are matters they should increasingly wish to share with others.

In certain cases Christian schools are able to establish smaller "mission schools" in regards to which they then act in a mentor capacity. This provides senior learners with the opportunity to share what they have learnt from God's Word at school with other learners who have not yet had the benefit of familiarizing themselves with that knowledge and the Christian faith.

The created world

Learners must learn to live in the right relationship with God's creation. For example, a Christian teacher who interrupts his class when the first rains of the season fall in order to give learners the opportunity to enjoy the rain for a few minutes, thereby nurtures a sensitivity in his or her learners for God's provision in and through nature.

King David rightly points out in the Psalms (ch 103) that children and even infants shall sing the praises of the Lord when they look at his works.

It is thus good if every learner can attend at least one 'nature school' during his or her school career. By looking at the mountains, trees, plant life and starry heavens, the learners get to know more of God's greatness and omnipotence than they will ever be able to learn in a classroom. Hobbies that teach learners about nature, such as bird watching, animal observation, or learning to distinguish between varieties of plants, must be encouraged. Thereby the learners also learn more about God's work of creation.

The Lord gave humankind the command not only to occupy the land, but also to work and conserve it. Part of every Christian teacher's task is to equip his or her learners to work as stewards of God's creation.

Primary school teachers can, for example, bring this principle home to the learners in a practical way by laying out a vegetable garden for each class at the school which the learners must cultivate and care for.

Alternatively, high school learners can tackle a nature conservation project such as planting indigenous trees or clearing up a polluted area. These and comparable projects teach learners not only to enjoy God's creation, but also to accept responsibility in the ways they relate to and care for it.

For consideration

Discuss the following points in group context:

How can a school's personnel, by way of their own conduct and otherwise, Motivate a mutually upbuilding relationship between parents and teachers?

What different sorts of projects can learners of different ages participate in, in order to sensitize them to how they should conduct themselves in relation to the created order?

Part 3

Defining a Christian school

Chapter 3.1

Why Christian schools?

Objectives

Christian schools are a gift from the Lord which He uses to educate his children to his honour and according to his will. This section focuses on the reasons why Christian parents and communities should establish such schools and how these schools differ from secular schools.

Reasons why parents (should) prefer Christian schools

There are various reasons why parents send their children to Christian schools. Many parents are unhappy about the moral decline that is sometimes, perhaps even often, seen in public schools. Christian schools, they believe, will protect their children from such social evils as drugs, pornography and sexual permissiveness.

Other parents feel that their children will not receive sufficient individual attention in public schools. They feel that the smaller classes and teachers' good work ethic in private schools will help their children to achieve better academically.

Then there are also parents who have been convinced by friends or family to send their children to a Christian school. They do this, not so much because they believe in Christian education, but because they do not want to be different from their friends or family.

Although some of these reasons have their merits, they may never be the most important reason as to why parents or caregivers enrol a learner in a Christian school.

The most important principle for Christian parents is that they must be obedient to the Lord. If the Lord proclaims in his Word that all education must take place within a Christian life

and worldview, they are called to obey this command. Their children must learn to look at reality through the spectacles of faith, so to say.

Since, from a Biblical vantage point, there is no scope for a neutral education, and only believing teachers should be instructing their children, parents are left with no other option than to establish Christian schools for their children.

Parents have peace of mind when they know that what their children are learning at school accords with their personal convictions of faith. In such cases, the school can rightly be referred to as an extension of the parental home. It provides the learners with a safe space wherein they are able to develop their God-given talents to the honour of the Lord.

A Christian school forms part of a community of faith

For Christian parents, the teaching of their own children is not the only thing that matters. They serve the Lord together with other parents in a community of faith, one wherein they accept reciprocal responsibility for each other's children.

This implies that every parent can and must apply the gifts he or she has received from the Lord to the benefit of all Christian learners and the whole of the schooling community. (Philippians 2:4,5) For example, a musical mother can present recorder lessons for primary school learners, or a technically competent father can help with the maintenance of the school facilities.

This principle holds not merely for parents of school-going children, but also for other congregants. Well-to-do members of the community can, for example, help needy parents with their school fees. If every individual within the community thinks only of his or her own interests, the community will find it difficult to establish a school, but if everyone helps each other, this becomes less difficult.

There can be reasons why, in certain cases, parents are unable to send their children to school, and instead need to home-school them. For example, in areas where there are no Christian schools or where the situation of a particular child means that that child would gain little if any benefit from a group education setting, this is certainly justified.

But parents who for selfish reasons place the educational interests of their own children above those of other learners, are thereby disregarding the bond of faith in which God placed them.

There thus lies an obligation on those who are stronger in the faith to support those who are weak. (1 Corinthians 12:21, Philippians 2:4) This Biblical principle also applies in respect of Christian education.

The school as a training ground for life

To a great extent, public schools reflect the nature of society in general. Like adults, learners rub shoulders every day with many persons and come across many different situations. This presents them with opportunities, but also with challenges they must learn to deal with. Even though learners are still young, they do have certain responsibilities. How they react to and

cope with different events may also play a determining role in terms of how they come to deal with challenges later in life.

In Christian schools, learners are guided to consider different challenges from a Biblical vantage point. The learners must know from a young age that the Lord's Word is a lamp for the roads they end up traveling through life. The Scriptural norms they learn must determine the relationships they form, how they handle conflict, and how they deal with success or failure.

If learners practise at home and at school how to organise their lives in accordance with God's will as revealed in his Word, Christian parents and teachers have done everything in their power to enable the learner to persevere in the faith in their adult lives.

This is where Christian teachers' responsibility lies in preparing their learners for the world in which they live. The instruction they receive must always be relevant and applicable. It is, for example, unacceptable to read from the same old English and Afrikaans storybooks every year, or to struggle with outdated software in information technology. Christian education never clings slavishly to the past, but is always up-to-date and innovative.

Learners must be guided not only in making use of the possibilities that God provided in and through his creation, but also to apply them to his honour and to the benefit of their fellow people. Dedication and hard work is however required of a Christian teacher if he or she hopes to keep his learners abreast of the latest developments in his or her subject area. Those who succeed in this not only enrich their learners' lives, but also equip them to play a leading role in society.

Aren't Christian schools out of touch with the world?

There are Christian parents who don't send their children to Christian schools out of fear that they will be raised out of touch with the world. Such parents feel that their children must get to deal with the ways of the world from a young age in order to be able to cope with what life throws at them.

Doesn't it happen, they ask themselves, that a learner could easily deviate from the road after he has left the protective environment of his or her school and parental home? For example, they fear that learners who have never learnt at school to relate to atheist, Muslim or Hindu schoolmates will find it difficult as adults to relate to them.

According to this view, Christian parents and communities must not build walls around themselves, but rather let those influences that are apparent in secular schools be felt. Although this view might make sense to uninformed parents, unfortunately it ignores the influence of a secular school on a learner and on the immature nature of a child.

Christian education prepares learners specifically to be able to maintain themselves in the secular world. Those who allege that learners in Christian schools don't learn to deal with the problem areas of life, fail to take into account the great wealth of Christian education. Only those who realise that the world and everything in it belongs to God will understand that

learners will be able to live to the full if they are able to evaluate all things in the light of God's Word and their relationship with Him.

Learners who have never learnt to do this at school have actually received an education that is out of touch with the world. They have no fixed basis on which to stand, and are consequently at the mercy of every crisis that arises in their lives.

Christian schools do precisely the opposite. They don't send their learners unprepared into the world, but equip them to form relationships on the right basis and to apply with wisdom the means that God provides. Such learners are able to live their lives to the fullest.

A Christian school equips children to be disciples of Jesus Christ

There is a lot more to Christian schools than the right example being set by believing teachers to their learners. A Christian school also amounts to more than a group of learners doing Bible study together during break or praying together before a test or exam. Although these activities have value in themselves, they comprise only a small part of the great wealth that a Christian education offers.

In Christian schools above all else, learners learn to be disciples of Jesus Christ. The command to make disciples among all nations doesn't apply only to those living far away or who have not yet heard the Christian message.

Every Christian teacher has a responsibility in helping to make disciples of his or her learners. In everything they engage in at school, learners must remember what Jesus Christ commanded. Christian education is thus not just a sprinkling of icing sugar on a secular cake; it helps to form the learners as disciples of Christ.

Making disciples means that learners are taught to serve the Lord in obedience and to honour Him as the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Learners must learn to know and understand God's creation and their own place within it.

Discipleship is not just a theory, but faith in practice. How learners conduct themselves with their friends, take care of the school property, obey figures of authority and review their own conduct – all of these form part of discipleship. Do the Lord and his will take first place in your learners' lives, or not?

In Christian schools, learners learn that disciples of the Lord must obey Him with childlike faith in everything. Isn't it wonderful that Jesus Christ taught that small children and even babies proclaim the glory of God? Learners who have learnt to do this at home and at school are true disciples of Jesus Christ. Christian schools can and must serve as instruments in God's hands, also in this.

For consideration

Divide into two groups and debate the following points in group context:

1. Parents are free to send their children to public schools, provided that they take the trouble to provide their children with Bible instruction at home.
2. Parents who educate their children at home, make it difficult for learners to experience what it means to serve the Lord in the faith community.

Chapter 3.2

Establishing a Christian school

Objectives

Every faith community should give attention to the establishment of a Christian school. This chapter discusses what believers can do to establish such a school and what the elected control body (school management) should be engaged in.

Convening a members' association

The establishment of a Christian school is something many Christians consider to be beyond their competence. They regard themselves as laymen when it comes to the establishment and management of schools, and they accordingly shy away from it. Such parents don't realise that it is indeed within their capacity. All that it calls for is prayer, co-operation and, of course, hard work.

It doesn't require well-to-do parents or a number of people with tertiary qualifications to establish a school and get it going. What is necessary is enthusiasm and a childlike trust in the Lord that He will provide the necessary persons, means and perseverance to be able to carry out this task.

Christian schools are based on the principle that believers work together to ensure that learners receive Bible-based instruction. As a start, an association of interested and concerned persons can be convened. Such an association need not necessarily consist only of parents. It can include all like-minded believers. After all, Christian brothers and sisters support each other in many aspects, including the education of the community's children.

It will help if, for example, parents of preschool children or learners' grandparents, as well as persons who believe in the need for a Christian school, also join the association. Such persons

not only broaden the financial basis of the school, but can also be of help with the necessary thinking and planning.

Those who support the initiative but who don't have the time or energy to be actively involved in the association's activities can also join as members or friends of the association. Such persons (or organisations) can contribute to the finances of the association or can advise, perhaps as friends without voting rights at member meetings.

The association will strive to establish and maintain the Christian school it serves. A Christian school differs fundamentally from other private schools. There are, for example, elite private schools where individual attention is provided to learners in small classes, and where the learners can benefit from the latest equipment.

It is possible that parents with expectations of this sort might also be interested in forming part of a Christian school members association. This can however be dangerous. Such parents might undermine the primary objective of the school – namely Christian education. It would be advisable to admit such persons (believers though they may be) only as friends of the association. A selection process should thus be in place.

Existing members must ensure that the association does not gradually lose its Christian character through the admission of otherwise-minded persons. There are many examples of schools that commenced as Christian schools but that later evolved into elite private schools. The words of the wise Solomon apply in such cases: If the Lord does not erect a house, it is all in vain.

The election of a management body

Probably the most important task of a members' association is the election of a control body or school management. This body represents the parents and is responsible for many management tasks. Its most important task is to ensure that the school lives out its Christian character in all aspects of its functioning.

It is not necessary that all members of the control body be parents of learners at the school. Pensioners, particularly, often have time on their hands and also the necessary skills and experience to make a meaningful contribution to a control body. Nonetheless it is important that the majority of control body members are parents of existing learners.

Through actively listening to their children and observing what they engage in, parents usually gain a good idea of what is happening at the school and if there are areas that need to be addressed by the control body. For example, if learners come home and say that some teachers are racist, or tell inappropriate jokes or make inappropriate comments, the control body is alerted to areas that require attention.

Although it is not necessarily wrong that ministers of the church should serve on the control body, reliance should not be placed on them to preserve the character of the school. It is, rather, the responsibility of parents as believers to ensure this. Members of the school association should also take care not to elect so-called "experts" to the control body.

There is often a conviction that a lawyer, accountant or marketing specialist should figure on the control body. If such persons are elected on the grounds of their professional skills and not on their convictions of faith, it can easily happen that the school ends up being run as a business and thereby losing its character. Members should rather elect wise, reliable and trustworthy persons to the control body who are able to bring in outside skills in an advisory capacity where necessary. An incorrect approach adopted by world-renowned universities like Yale and Harvard has largely contributed to the loss of their Christian character.

Members of management bodies should not serve for excessively long consecutive periods of time. It sometimes happens that certain persons manage the school for many years according to their own will and convictions. They thereby not only deprive other persons of the opportunity to apply their gifts in the service of the school community, but also alienate themselves from those who feel that they are being deprived of any voice in the school's affairs.

There should be good reasons as to why a person should serve for a term of longer than three or four years. Reasons such as the perceptual lack of other suitable candidates or that a member of the control body does not mind continuing to perform the task, bear no weight. A policy in respect of periodical retirement can help prevent the school from being controlled by a group of individuals, or from losing all of its skills and experience in one go.

The tasks of a management body

It is the responsibility of a management body to provide suitable personnel, facilities and means to run a Christian school effectively. Since they are not primarily skilled in education, they must withhold themselves from interfering unnecessarily in the day-to-day functioning of the school. For example, the drawing up of an exam timetable or the way in which learners rotate classes is outside the competence of the management body.

The responsibilities of a management body of a Christian school include:

- Ensuring that suitable personnel are appointed. The Christian character of candidates considered for specific posts must play a determining role. Subject skills alone are not sufficient to consider a person for a vacant post. When it comes to important appointments like that of a school principal or school director, members of the association should also be consulted.
- Provision and maintenance of facilities. The classrooms and hall of a church that are used mainly on Sundays can be considered as the ideal opportunity for a Christian school to acquire affordable facilities for a start. It also helps if the management body can establish a library for personnel and learners. Books on Christian education can be acquired for the library to enable the personnel to familiarize themselves more indepthly herewith.
- The financial management of the school also falls within the ambit of the management body. It is their task to draw up an annual budget and lay it before the

members for approval. They must also ensure that the budget be adhered to as far as possible. If parents do not pay their school fees or fall into arrears, the matter must be followed up. The management body must also ensure that the personnel receive a reasonable remuneration. The worker is, after all, worth his wage!

- The most important responsibility of the management body is to maintain the Christian character of the school. This is its primary responsibility and it cannot and may not be left exclusively in the hands of the school principal and his or her personnel. Regular feedback from the school principal and personnel on what they are doing to promote the school's Christian character is thus essential. This, however, is not enough. The ideal is that all the teachers should be visited at home regularly in order to ascertain what each one individually is doing in this regard. During such visits, the members of the control body can also ascertain any challenges experienced by the personnel and what the management body can do to support the personnel therein.

Admission policy

One of the greatest challenges faced by a management body is the formulation and implementation of a learner admission policy. The nature and practical execution of this policy plays a great role in determining the character of the school.

There can be significant pressure for an open admission policy, as this would lead to increased learner numbers. It is reasoned that the increased income arising from this will help to cover the expenditure. According to this standpoint, the financial pressure on the existing parents will be reduced, and in addition the increased income will enhance the financial viability of the school.

This may sound like a good idea, but could easily lead to a change in the character of the school. For example, teachers may lose the freedom to speak with their learners about aspects such as the sanctification of the Sunday if a large number of learners come from homes where this is not practised by the parents. If those responsible for establishing the school as a Christian institution become the minority, they may lose control over the Christian character of the school.

This does not mean that Christian schools have to be "small and pure". The opposite is actually true. Christian schools must grow, but in the correct way. An appeal must be made to parents who share the school's norms to send their children to the school. Affordability will not be the priority; those who can afford the cost can cross-subsidise the children of parents who are not able to fully afford the school fees.

To ensure that parents enrol their children in the school for the right reasons, it will be good if members of the management body first visit such parents at home. During such a visit, the delegation should try to establish if, despite the family possibly suffering shortcomings and faults, they nonetheless strive to serve the Lord in obedience.

A Christian school thus exists not only for the children of a small group of "super believers", but for all children emanating from believing Christian homes. Children whose parents want them educated in the fear of the Lord thus belong in a Christian school, for it will be important to such parents that their children do not grow confused and uncertain. Children ought to hear the same things at home, in church and at school.

For consideration

The members' association of every Christian school must have a constitution in terms of which they manage the school on a normative basis. Draw up a list of points that in your view should be addressed in such a constitution.

Chapter 3.3

Christian schools in the community

Objectives

No learner is educated in isolation. Besides the parental home, school and church, the community also exerts much influence over the forming of learners. This influence can be positive or negative. Christian teachers must take note of this and, where necessary, put structures in place to ensure that it is beneficial in nature.

Education takes place within a community

The society in which teachers live and work exerts a great influence over their thinking and conduct, often without their realising it. In Chapter 1 of this book we focused on how society influences the lives and the worldview of Christian teachers. This chapter again looks at how a society can influence learners, but also how a Christian school can influence a community.

It is clear from the Bible that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of learners not only through parents and teachers, but also by way of other groups and individuals. Christian teachers are well aware of the important role that society plays in the education of youth.

Learners usually attach considerable value to other people's opinions. While still in primary school, the views of parents and teachers still carry weight. But at high school level, learners easily attach more value to the views of other persons, including their friends. It can be confusing to learners if different sectors of the community don't speak out of one mouth.

For example, this can happen when the school forbids girls from wearing dresses with a plunging neckline, but nobody finds fault with this at church on Sunday. This problem affects more than just the home, school and church. It affects the entire community.

Or, to give another example, it is difficult when parents forbid their children to look at movies with an age restriction, while their friends whose homes they visit, or a club to which they belong, screens such films every Friday evening.

If everyone involved in the teaching of learners has the same values, a certain culture arises in the community about what is acceptable and what is not. For example, if the use of bad language is unacceptable, learners will tend to adhere to that standard. But if they hear sport coaches using bad language during training sessions, or they hear the Name of the Lord being taken in vain on television, there is a strong chance that they themselves will indulge in it as well.

The solution to the problem does not lie in Christians withdrawing themselves totally from the community. Rather, they should discuss among themselves how to promote the right culture in the community. A school and its teachers are ideally positioned to play a leading role in the community in this regard.

Schools can, from time to time, convene parents, church ministers and other figures of authority in the community for a joint discussion about the education of youth. Norms can be laid down at such forums, which everyone present undertakes to honour when they are working with learners, and indeed at all times.

Organisations and institutions

Institutions like sports clubs or cultural associations run by parents and teachers usually keep learners meaningfully engaged, and also convey certain knowledge, skills and attitudes to them. For example, for learners participating in a choir, self-discipline is required to attend practice sessions regularly and to memorise the songs that they will sing. Thereby they not only learn to read music, but also develop a sense of what is beautiful.

But where parents and teachers fail to create such opportunities, the learners usually establish their own groups. Such structures often focus exclusively on the learners' own needs, and thus make little or no contribution to their forming. In extreme cases learners might even establish gangs, to the disadvantage of themselves and other members of the community.

Teachers who see their work as a calling and live it out accordingly appreciate that their task extends well beyond the classroom. Together with the parents, they attempt to arrange enjoyable and upbuilding social, sports and cultural events for the learners to participate in. Learners must also learn to join the right groups, and what organisations should rather be avoided.

For example, in an organisation devoted to caring for others, they can learn to be of help to the aged, while a debating society can help learners to formulate, articulate and express their thinking and convictions.

Such constructive activities also provide learners with the opportunity to give practical effect to their faith together with other believers. They gain the opportunity to participate actively in the community of believers, and thereby prepare themselves to participate as adults in their calling in the community.

The influence of the mass media

Learners are influenced not only by their immediate environment, but very importantly, also by the secular mass media that penetrates their consciousness. Media like the radio, TV, internet, smart phones, social media etcetera generally carry a certain message or try to influence their followers to think along certain lines.

Some programmes, such as those dealing with nature conservation and poverty alleviation, provide constructive messages, but in other cases they directly contravene Biblical norms and values. Things like free sex or the pursuit of material wealth are, for example, regularly portrayed as acceptable practices.

Many learners thereby develop a dualistic outlook. They still see themselves as Christians, but think they can also participate in these sinful practices which are portrayed by so-called role models as normal and everyday in nature.

The influence of the secular media is so great that Christian teachers need to inform the learners and their parents about the dangers they hold for them. Parents must, for example, be advised to check on the programmes that their children watch on TV and the websites they visit on the internet.

Parents must not simply accept that their children will involve themselves only in what is right and good. The guidance that parents give their children to help them learn to distinguish between programmes and games that are constructive and those that are not, is of the utmost importance.

Teachers must also point out to the learners that there are other dangers posed by the mass media. Although the games learners play or the videos they watch might not necessarily be wrong, they do hold the danger of so much time being devoted to them that other important activities fall by the wayside.

For example, many learners no longer make time to communicate with their family members and friends or take part in extramural activities. If this happens, they have not yet learnt to prioritise things correctly. Learners must learn that there is a time for all things, and how to spend their time.

Christian education provides light

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ compared believers to a city situated on a mountain which cannot be hidden. The city is visible from all sides. (Matthew 5:14) This applies also to Christian education. The learners must be what the Lord made them: light-bearers in a dark

world. By being living witnesses of Jesus Christ, teachers and learners must shine their light upon the world in such a way that unbelievers can see it and glorify God.

However, if Christian teachers or learners make themselves guilty of things like fraud, theft or sexual harassment, precisely the opposite happens. In such cases the community loses its respect for the school. And not only is the school's good name dragged through the mire, but also, ultimately, the honour of God.

The secular news media are always ready to trumpet contraventions of this nature. Learners and teachers must thus consider very carefully what they busy themselves with, both in and outside of school hours.

The greatest value of Christian education, however, lies in the "product" it delivers to the community. The prayer of Christian teachers and parents is always that learners who are receiving a Christian education may go on to exert a positive influence on the community, and the Lord has and continues to bless their efforts. They are not oblivious to the immediate circumstances of the community, but are conscious of what the Lord has in mind for it through the Word and remain faithful to God's Word. This includes the following aspects:

- In their employment, they are not only loyal, honest and trustworthy, but also work hard and display a good work ethic. These are the characteristics any employer requires of his or her employees.
- They don't prioritise only their own needs, but also consider the needs of other persons in the community. They are, for example, generous to the poor.
- They act with wisdom by judging things from a normative frame of reference. Their views and decisions are thus reasonable and fair.

With the Lord's blessing, learners who are taught that and shown how the Biblical teachings are fundamental to the whole of life grow up to become good artisans, officials, professional people, business people and entrepreneurs. They organise their working lives according to normative principles such as honesty, patience and forgiveness. These norms serve as the foundation for a healthy community and well-functioning society.

For consideration

Describe in less than 120 words the onslaught that the secular media launch against learners' thinking, and how Christian teachers can act not only to deflect this onslaught, but also to equip learners to give full effect to their mission in the community.

Chapter 3.4

Christian schools are unique

Objectives

Christian schools may not operate in isolation from the world, but must actively engage with the surrounding society. However, this does not mean that they must adopt the lifestyle of the world. The opposite is actually true. They must show through their acts and the things they avoid that they function according to God's Word. This section focuses on how believers in Christian schools can and must live out their calling in obedience to the Lord.

Is the closest school necessarily the best?

Many Christians are under the wrong impression that the Lord does not really care about the little things of life. Such persons may attend church services regularly, make their monthly contributions and even faithfully do Bible study. But when it comes to their tastes in music, books and TV programmes or other aspects of their daily lives, they are less inclined to seek the Lord's will.

Unfortunately, education falls into the same category for many Christians. To such Christians the closest school might be regarded as the best school. As their reasoning typically goes, whether a child attends a "neutral" public school or a Christian school does not really matter, since the curriculum looks more or less the same. Such Christians argue that in both types of school learners must commence with reading and writing from Grade 1, and at the end of their final year year they will in any case write precisely the same exam.

Those who think in this manner do not realise that what may appear to amount to minor differences can nonetheless exert immense influence over their children's thinking. The humanistic point of departure of the school that teaches its learners that all conduct is justified provided that it doesn't harm another person might, to many parents, look like the Biblical command to love one's neighbour as oneself – but this is most definitely not the case.

Where the believer acknowledges that God's authority applies to conduct in all spheres of life, the humanist believes in the autonomy of the individual. The difference in this way of thinking might perhaps not immediately be discernible in learners' lives, but the seed is being systematically planted to think in a different direction from that indicated in God's Word.

The consequence of this is that later on in life, many believers start to struggle with social problems like drugs, premarital sex or homosexual relationships. How can it be wrong (even in the eyes of the Lord) if they are not thereby harming anyone? Thereby they are elevating their own thinking above the authority of God's Word.

The implications are clear. Learners come to accept the un-Biblical way of thinking as right and true. Only later, when problems arise, do parents realise that they and their children no longer stand on the same fundamentals.

That was the case when a group of Grade 9 learners indulged in alcohol on a sporting tour. They were totally unable to understand the concern of their parents, since their action had harmed absolutely nobody. After the incident, one parent rightly noted: "I don't understand! I didn't I raise my daughter this way."

The tragedy of the matter was that he was 100% correct. That was not the way he had raised his child; it was the school community that had formed her thinking. Never had the parent foreseen that what he had regarded as unimportant would have such a great influence on his daughter's life. The choice of the right school is thus no small matter. Parents must ensure in obedience to the Lord that they choose a Christian school.

Christian education is radical

Christian education is always radical. Whether it be the appointment of leaders, service conditions of the personnel or the management of the school, God's Word stands at its core. The wise King Solomon put it effectively in the book of Proverbs when he wrote that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (ch 1:7) Learners can truly understand subjects such as Geography, Mathematics and Life Sciences only if they learn to see them in the light of God's Word.

This also applies to other facets of Christian education. It is only in Christ that discipline really makes sense, or that one can understand the special bond between believing teachers and their learners. In this respect, Christian schools differ radically from secular schools when it comes to teaching practice, the good name of the school and the interests of the learners.

This does not mean that Christian schools and their teachers have all the answers and that the schools are performing absolutely faultlessly in carrying out their educational tasks. Part of being radical is that the staff will be aware of their own shortcomings and faults, and accept that they constantly need to re-examine the self and their relationship with the Lord.

Christian schools can never claim, as secular schools do, that they have "arrived" or been successful simply because its learners' examination results are usually outstanding. There always remains hard work for the school and its teachers to properly reflect and continue to reflect God's image.

All staff members must thus jointly and individually continue to ask where the school might be falling (or have come to fall) short in its service and obedience to the Lord. What this means in practice is that the staff will always be willing to learn and deepen themselves further in God's revelation. A model teacher who knows everything about his or her subject area and believes he or she has nothing more to learn, should not be found in a Christian school.

The place of Christian schools

Through the centuries, believers have pondered the question of what the exact place of Christian schools should be. Many believers regard the school as an extension of the church, while others perceive the teachers to be an extension of the parental home. Then there are those who believe that a Christian school has its own place as an independent societal institution. A Biblically-based answer to this question is not so simple. All three of these points of departure contain elements to which believers must be obedient.

The church has a distinct task in respect of the teaching and education of its members' children. Members of a faith-based community must take note of each others' acts. The teaching of children is one of the spheres in which believers must not only support and encourage each other, but also must caution each other should it be necessary.

For example, if members were to notice that fellow members are neglecting the education of their children or that they are being incorrectly educated, it is their duty to intervene. Church elders, particularly, who have been appointed to watch over the church, Christ's flock, must take note during house visits whether or not the parents are raising their children along Biblical lines.

This does not however mean that the church must establish and run schools for the children of their members. Just as the church does not choose life partners for persons who wish to marry, but only provides the environment for it, so it should do the same in respect of education. Through the effective provision of guidance, the church must properly equip its members to comply with their responsibilities in this respect.

According to the Bible, believing parents are primarily responsible for the education of their children. Christian parents must take the trouble to establish schools for their children that are

in line with their own faith convictions. They don't only appoint the right personnel, but must also ensure that a Biblically-based curriculum is followed. This is normally done through the election of a parental organisation – the management body – that performs this task on their behalf.

Since the parents are also responsible for the remuneration of the personnel, it sometimes happens that certain parents regard the personnel as their employees. Such parents incorrectly think they have the right to walk into the classrooms at any time and prescribe how the teachers must perform their task.

Those who conduct themselves in this way fail to understand the concept of a body that must function as a unit. The professional nature and character of education requires the appointment of persons to perform this specialised task. Parents must continue to be aware that what their children are learning is truly Christian in nature. If this is not the case, the teachers concerned must be called to account in an orderly manner.

Although parents may not prescribe teachers how to perform their tasks, this does not mean that teachers can act as they wish. It is expected of Christian teachers to regularly give account to parents about the nature and character of their instruction, as well as the individual progress of each learner. Together with the parents, they must discuss how the learners can best be prepared to take up their cross in the adult world.

It is, however, not only to parents that teachers are accountable. Even more importantly, they must give account to God of their words and deeds. It can happen that parents have an improper expectation of teachers, such as expecting them to give the learners homework that can be done on or to train for a match on a Sunday.

Teachers must do what is right by obeying the Lord more than the parents. The ideal, however, is that parents, teachers and other believers should function in harmony as a unit to educate the next generation to the honour of God.

The uniqueness of Christian schools in a community

Learners and teachers who busy themselves with the right things generally enjoy the regard and appreciation of the community. Not only does the school to which they are connected maintain high academic standards, but the conduct of the learners and teachers also testifies to dedication, humility, love and self-control.

Learners display respect for other persons' property and possessions, and don't indulge in such negative behaviours as vandalism or theft. They honour the integrity of other persons and take no part in derogatory conversations or gossip. Even the appearance and dress of the teachers and learners conveys a certain message.

Learners who conduct themselves responsibly bring honour to God's name. The community can see from their conduct that they are different from the world and that serving the Lord is not a burden upon them. (Matthews 5:16) Believers must behave in such a way that other persons can see God in their conduct and glorify Him for it. They see something of God's order

in the learners' disciplined conduct, and through their pleasant conduct they see something of the joy that Christians experience in serving the Lord.

It is important that learners in a Christian school should appreciate their responsibility in this respect and take the trouble in obedience to the Lord to portray the right image to the outside world.

For consideration

Describe in less than 120 words the unique nature and character that distinguishes a Christian school from a secular school. Give examples of how these differences will manifest themselves in practice in a school.

Chapter 3.5

Establishing and consolidating a school's Christian character

Objectives

Every school has its own unique character. Some schools are characterised by their notable academic or sports achievements. Others are known for the opportunities they give their learners to participate in a variety of activities. But what characterises a Christian school? This section focuses on how Christian schools can develop their own characters and live them out in practice.

The need for a Christian vision

It happens sometimes that parents, teachers and learners differ so greatly from each other that it is impossible to focus on a common purpose. For example, some parents and learners may feel that certain traditions, such as learners having to wear blazers to school, are old-fashioned and therefore should be changed, while others regard it as a tradition which may never be broken.

These differences can be so sharp that the persons concerned might even refuse to speak to each other, or go as far as actively resisting each other. As a result, parents might, for example, refuse to attend a function if a certain person has organised it.

Such conflicts usually occur where there is no common vision with which parents, teachers and learners uniformly associate themselves. In such cases, they focus on their own preferences and problems rather than on the development of the school's Christian character.

Without a clear vision in which the school believes and which it strives to hold fast, a Christian school runs the danger of not only losing its focus, but also of losing its way in all sorts of deviations. In such cases, the Bible no longer serves as the objective that binds everyone together, and everyone then follows whoever he or she thinks ought to be the leader.

In his epistle of James, he likens such people to wave-bound folk tossed around by every new fancy (ch 1:6-8). Such things may never happen in Christian schools. Everyone who is involved in the school must know what the Lord has called him or her to do – from the History teacher who explains the eternity of God's timeline to his or her learners, to the learner who serves as a custodian to leave the classroom neat and tidy. Every aspect of the school stands in service of this higher purpose, namely working to the honour of God.

Definition of a school's Christian character

It is therefore very important to state in writing, in simple and clear language, what the school believes in and what it stands for. Every employee, learner and parent must know precisely what the school believes in, what everyone's task is and what is expected of everyone who is involved in the school. Everyone thereby knows what they are striving for and what they must do to achieve this objective. It makes sense to set out all these points in such a way that they not only appeal to everyone's heart, but also bind all concerned together into a firm unit.

A Christian school's mission statement can contain the following three core elements:

- General declaration of faith regarding who God is, what Jesus Christ's redemptory work means, and what the Holy Spirit does. This relates to the authority of the Bible, the way in which God gathers a church together for Himself, and the sovereignty of God over all things. Aspects such as the Lord's love and grace, and also his sanctity and righteousness can also be described here.
- The position and place of humankind in God's creation, relating to aspects such as the sinful nature of humankind, the way in which believers are renewed by Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and how Christians as redeemed people must now live in thankfulness. Aspects such as humankind's calling and cultural mandate can also be articulated here. In respect of the world, God is professed as the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler over all things. Everything in creation finds its meaning and coherence in Jesus Christ, who was appointed by the Father.

- In turn, the acceptance of Jesus Christ's authority over education has to do with aspects such as the Biblical command to educate all learners in the fear of the Lord, and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the great Teacher who appoints parents and teachers to educate his children in his Name. Mention can also be made here of the purpose of Christian education and the task of parents and teachers in this regard. The way in which Jesus Christ's sovereignty must come to the fore in all subject areas and how every teacher must set the example, can also be described.

These points describing the school's character are not something that should simply remain in the background or be filed away in the principal's office. They are, rather, information that needs to be kept alive in the hearts of the teachers, parents and learners.

Parents and their children must discuss them together at home, and teachers and learners must be excited as they consider how the school's Christian character comes to the fore in all activities.

Establishment and implementation of the school's character

The unique character of a Christian school does not simply arise of its own accord. Careful planning and hard work are required to bring it into being. Many schools and teachers are under the illusion that once the character description has been set down on paper, it will come to the fore on its own in all the facets of the life of the school.

This does not, however, happen of its own accord. For a school's character to develop, the norms that it professes must find their practical implementation in the day-to-day functioning of the school. For example, to confess that all persons (including the learners) are sinful by nature, holds serious implications. It influences not only the way in which teachers view their learners, but also the expectations that they have of the learners.

This principle will find its full application only if the teachers consider together how to deal with a learner who disrupts the class or how to support a learner who has disappointed by falling seriously short of expectations. If teachers discuss such matters with each other and the learners on a normative basis, they are thereby able to form their thinking, which in turn has a direct influence on the character of the school.

It is the duty of everyone involved in the school, but in particular the principal and his management team, to ensure that regular consideration is given to how the character of the school is adhered to.

Norms which are adopted in the school's character description, such as the one that Christian education has the purpose of preparing learners for their calling in the adult world, can be discussed at parent evenings, at personnel meetings, and even with the learners themselves. Principals or department heads can also conduct discussions with the personnel on how they can best cooperate in developing the school's character.

Such discussions not only stimulate the thinking of the personnel, but also sensitise them to the unique character of the school. All formal discussions should preferably be candid in nature and illustrated by means of appropriate examples. If this does not happen, it is possible that the personnel might experience difficulty in perceiving the relevance of the school's character.

Few things can undermine a school's character more than failure to adhere to what is professed in the mission statement. For example, a school which professes that the Word of God is the source of authority, but then does not deal with personnel disputes along the lines of Matthew 18:15-17, but instead takes the matter to a worldly court, immediately loses its credibility.

Those who act thus, thereby damage their own and the school's credibility. They cannot expect learners to be stimulated by the character of the school if they themselves don't abide by it. But if schools are obedient even in regards to the small things (such as refraining from fundraising by means of lotteries), they thereby confirm their obedience to the authority of God's Word.

Such conduct gives the personnel and learners the confidence to live according to the school's own character. Thereby they establish and maintain a lifestyle for themselves that accords with their Christian worldview and practices.

Adhering to the school's Christian character in all spheres of life

The way in which the school's management body controls its finances, handles its administrative affairs, maintains the facilities or formulates policy, sets a certain standard that exerts a direct influence over the school's character.

For example, a management body that allows parents to run a beer garden at the school to raise funds for a tour thereby undermines the school's character. It is, rather, expected of the members of a management body to underwrite the norms set for the school they are managing, also through their personal lifestyles. If parents, personnel and learners see that the management adheres closely to these norms, they will be motivated to do the same.

The way in which teachers think and conduct themselves will determine perceptions of the school's Christian character. New teachers, particularly, must get to know the character of the school and how to give expression to it in the presentation of their subjects as well as in their dealings with the learners.

A mentorship programme in terms of which an experienced teacher serves as a guide to a beginner teacher can serve a useful purpose in this. Young teachers thereby learn not only what distinguishes Christian schools from secular schools, but also gain a better understanding of the fundamentals of Christian education. If every teacher (old and young)

individually, but also jointly, take(s) ownership of the school's character, God promises that He will show them the fruits of their labour.

Learners must continuously and in everything encounter and engage with the school's Christian character. What they learn in class, the way they are dealt with and the enthusiasm with which the teachers perform their tasks compels them to meditate upon what happens at school and in life more broadly. The more they think about this over the years, the more they will learn to make it their own.

The hope is that later on in life, they do what is right not out of fear of punishment or in imitation of their parents and teachers, but because what they have learned is what they themselves have come to believe. When this level is reached, the learners have truly grown in their faith.

In thankfulness to the Lord who allows this growth, it can be expected that such learners will give expression to their calling in the world. Schools that strive to maintain the Christian character of education may humbly observe how their Christian teachings come to bear fruit in the lives of their learners.

For consideration

Draw up a list of points which in your view are important in the establishment of a Christian school's character statement.

Chapter 3.6

Further important aspects

Objectives

There is more to Christian schools than merely the completion of a prescribed syllabus. Christian teachers must teach their learners from the vantage point of a Christian worldview to ensure that the latter perceive the subject matter in the right context. This section focuses on aspects teachers in Christian schools need to give particular attention to in ensuring effective instruction.

Unity in education

Christian schools don't function in isolation. Through their commitment to Jesus Christ as their sovereign, they are also bound to each other as members of Christ's body. The priority in Christian schools revolves not only around each school's own interests and how it can

achieve better than other schools, but also around the well-being of other schools. If a given school makes good progress, everyone rejoices with it, and by the same token if another school is in a state of crisis, all share in its suffering.

A special responsibility rests upon strongly established schools. It is their task to be of service to smaller or newly established schools by, for example, providing them with a curriculum or assisting them with various administrative tasks. Where feasible, established schools can even "adopt" a mission school and thereby accept co-responsibility for it. Schools that do this thereby demonstrate to their learners what it means to be of service to one's neighbours.

The unity between Christian schools extends further than simply promoting a few primary or high schools engaged in Christian education. A clear line must also run between pre-schools, primary schools, high schools, technical schools, universities and other tertiary institutions.

Though they work at different levels, all of these institutions teach their learners on the basis of the same truth. Just as toddlers in the pre-school can learn in a simple way that the Lord cares for them, so botany and zoological students can come to the same realisation through the study of certain organisms under a microscope.

Some parents are inclined to think that the education their children receive at high school is more important than the one they gain at primary school, and that tertiary education is likewise more important than basic (primary and secondary) education. This view is not correct. To the Lord, all levels of education are equally important. Learners at all levels must recognise Jesus Christ as the head of all things and honour Him for it.

The interconnection of knowledge

Since all subject areas have their foundation in Jesus Christ, they must together form a unity. No subject can be studied or properly understood independently of all other subjects. The Physics teacher needs words (language) to explain certain forces to his or her learners, while the History teacher needs to know about the oceanic currents (Geography) in order to recount the records of the discoverers to his or her learners.

Primary school teachers too can bring to the fore particular ideas in order to acquaint their learners with this theme of unity.

For example, "the family" as a theme lends itself outstandingly to draw all subject areas into a unity. During poetry periods, poems relating to families can be read out, while in History the learners can take note of the origins of their families. In Geography, the focus falls on the environment within which the families live, and in Life Orientation the focus falls on aspects that characterise a happy family. In Christian schools, the hand of the Lord comes clearly to the fore in all of these facets. Thereby the learners are enabled to see the unity between the subjects in Christ.

In Christian schools, no subject may be placed above another. The marks gained by learners in Mathematics and Science might perhaps be important to obtain admission to certain lines of study, but to the Lord, all aspects of his kingdom are equally important.

This does not mean that learners and their teachers may not prefer certain lines of study to others. However, what it does mean is that they may not look down upon other subjects. The Natural Sciences Department of the school ought not to be elevated above the Economics or the Arts departments.

This principle applies particularly to the various types of schools to which parents send their children. Academic schools are not elevated above technical or agricultural schools. Those who are guilty of thinking along these lines are thereby wrongly elevating certain God-given gifts above others. This may not happen in Christian schools.

The hidden curriculum

It is expected of teachers in Christian schools not only to work through the prescribed curriculum, but also to give attention to the so-called "hidden curriculum". This curriculum includes all matters not included in the formal curriculum but which nevertheless are important.

For example, there lies considerably greater educational value in discussing the subject of death with one's learners if a classmate has unexpectedly died, than simply proceeding with the prescribed curriculum after such a tragic event. Other matters that might arise from time to time include such things as natural disasters, challenging social problems, or the commemoration of historic events such as the Reformation.

However, it is not only spontaneously arising matters to which teachers must give attention. They must also consciously take note of aspects that relate specifically to Christian education. One such matter, for example, is the different styles of learning via which learners study. Every learner is created uniquely and thus has his or her own learning style. Not all learners sit and listen to a teacher for an entire period or two in the same manner.

Christian teachers who realise this try as far as possible to accommodate all learners' learning styles in their classes. For example, interposed in their lessons, they will consciously include certain physical kinetic activities for the learners in order to accommodate the learning styles of such learners.

The use of non-Christian teaching material

The need for a Christian curriculum has already been discussed in Chapter 1.5 of this book. The matter under discussion here is that of whether teachers may in certain cases make use of non-Christian handbooks, videos or other articles. Many parents and teachers are of the opinion that Christian schools may make use of secular sources, provided that the teachers ensure that the context is interpreted from a Biblical vantage point.

For example, teachers can point out to the learners that sexual immorality is wrong where it arises in a poetic or prose text. According to this view, there must be an openness in Christian education to ensure that learners do not remain uninformed.

There is no doubt that the Lord in his grace also grants special insights to unbelievers. Think, for example, of the work that designers of vehicles and other equipment perform every day. Although some or even many of the world's inventors and workers may not be followers of Christ, believers may still use their products to the upbuilding of Christ's people on earth.

The same principle also applies in Christian schools. Christian teachers can in certain cases make use of dictionaries, videos and guides drawn up or manufactured by unbelievers.

The question, however, is not whether teachers make use of such material, but rather, what is the purpose thereof? If the purpose of a bilingual dictionary is to provide the meaning of a certain word in another language, the use of such a dictionary presents no problem. But if the purpose of Christian school handbooks is to enable learners to see more of God's works, it is foolish to make use of secular handbooks written by unbelievers.

The application of technology

There is no doubt that technological development is having a direct influence on education. For example, computer programmes make it possible to process learners' marks almost immediately, while new communication networks ensure that parents receive information on a regular basis.

Although such technology was developed by people, it was the Lord that provided for the possibility of it in his creation. Christians thus have the freedom to use it provided that it is done to the honour of God and the benefit of all.

The question then arises as to the role that technology can and may play in the instruction of learners. In principle the Lord does not call upon technology but on parents, teachers and other faithful persons to educate his children. To be sure, technology can convey certain knowledge, but in general it has only limited capacity to engender the right attitudes in learners.

No computer programme or video can engender love for the Lord and his Word in learners like a motivated Christian teacher can. For example, there is a great difference between learners viewing a video on the value of good hygiene, and a teacher who explains it to them with passion. Learners can see in the teacher's eyes how he or she feels about it and understand the seriousness of it, which no video can reflect to the same extent.

It does not follow that Christian teachers may not use technology in their classes, even to great advantage. The internet and other multimedia sources can, for example, expose learners to certain information that otherwise would be unavailable. This technology may, however, only be used as a supportive tool. It may never become an object in itself. Teachers who use new technologies only for the impression that it gives, totally miss the core of Christian education.

The opposite is however also true. Teachers who refuse to use technological aids thereby deny the means that the Lord grants to educate his children. Only technologies which do not distract the learners' attention away from the Lord and his works, but rather focus their attention upon Him, can and must be used.

For consideration

Think critically of the way in which you might bring the above matters to bear upon your teaching. Where can you possibly make improvements?

- Are you attuned to make your subject area part of a greater whole?
- Do you have the ability to apply technology in such a way that it makes a meaningful contribution to conveying your subject matter?
- Do you take the trouble to select the right educational material for your learners?

Chapter 3.7

The role of management

Objectives

It is easy to underestimate the important role that managers play in education. It is their responsibility to ensure that the personnel and learners are properly equipped and have the necessary means to allow education to take place.

The need for normative (Christian) management

The ability to be able to manage well is a gift from the Lord. We read in the Bible how the Lord gave persons like Joseph, Moses, Daniel and Nehemiah the ability, knowledge and insight to be able to undertake exceptional management tasks. They would not have been able to perform them of their own strength, but in and through the working of the Holy Spirit they distinguished themselves from other persons.

Despite achieving much in the eyes of the world, they themselves always remained humble. They knew it was God who had called them and made them competent to be of service in his kingdom.

The same attitude must continue to live today in the hearts of Christian managers. Such managers know that God uses them as instruments in his hand in order to perform his will. They don't strive for personal honour, but seek in obedience to know the will of Him who sent them.

There is always a need in Christian schools for competent, mission-inspired personnel, particularly school principals, subject heads and department heads. Such persons usually have a clear Bible-based vision against which all procedures, policy and organisational structures are tested. All activities at the school must accord with this vision, thereby to contribute to the maintenance and enrichment of the school's Christian character.

From the handbooks learners use to the songs they sing at school concerts, all must testify to what is true and right. The vision of such managers lives in the hearts of the school community. Together he personnel, parents and learners accordingly strive to build up the school along Biblical norms. They don't allow themselves to be misled by worldly views, but grow together in knowledge of and obedience to the Lord. Such managers are a blessing from the Lord.

Characteristics of Christian managers

Taking the leadership in a Christian school is a great responsibility. Not everyone has the necessary gifts to provide leadership to the personnel and learners as a school principal, subject or department head. The Bible warns that those who wish to serve as leaders must take responsibility not only for their own conduct but also for that of their followers.

Managers who realise this, perform their task in prayerful dependence on the Lord. They pray for themselves, and also for their followers. They ask for wisdom and insight so that they don't bring harm upon the affairs of the Lord, but rather bring his faithfulness, love and righteousness upon everyone concerned.

As bearers of the authority of Jesus Christ, they act with God-given authority. A school principal may thus speak to a young woman about her dress style, and a subject head may caution teachers who don't perform their tasks as they should.

Good managers succeed in letting the school's vision live in the hearts of the personnel and learners. Through individual discussions and structured information sessions, the personnel and learners not only internalise the vision but also help to establish and further build up the school's Christian character.

For example, History teachers will gather under the leadership of the Human Sciences subject head to discern which Biblical norms come to the fore in history and how they can bring them to the attention of the learners.

A good subject head will want his or her personnel to see more of the Lord's hand in their subject areas, enabling them to impart this knowledge to the learners. Where necessary, they will stimulate the thinking of the personnel and learners by asking critical questions about good or bad habits. They keep the personnel focused on the school's Christian character. They don't seek recognition for their own conduct, but are thankful to the Lord for the growth that He brings about in their own and other believers' lives.

Creation of a Christ-centred learning environment

Scope within which the personnel and learners can grow in knowledge of and trust in the Lord does not come of itself. It needs to be created and maintained. Christian managers must give specific attention to it by means of the following aspects:

- By demonstrating to the personnel and learners that they exist in a personal, living relationship with God. What God reveals in and through his Word determines and guides their lives. Such managers know their own brokenness, realise that it is through sheer grace that they receive redemption in Jesus Christ, and therefore live a life of thankfulness to the glory of the Lord.
- By giving practical effect, in their own conduct, to the Biblical norms to which the school subscribes. Learners must be able to see in the managers' behaviour that their lives are ruled by norms such as humility, duty, honesty and fairness. There is no point, for example, in school principals expecting the personnel to treat the learners with respect, when they themselves do not treat their administrative personnel accordingly.
- By establishing the right relationships with personnel and learners. The personnel must realise that they serve the authority of Jesus Christ, and they must be respected for that. This does not mean that they can misuse their position. They must, rather, strive to be of service like Jesus Christ. Where necessary, however, they must take a firm stand, without trying to control everything.
- By providing learners and personnel with opportunities for spiritual growth. The way in which the personnel and learners conduct themselves testifies that this is done through love for Christ and not out of loyalty to the manager. Good managers will ensure their humility so that the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over all things comes to the fore ever more.

In Christian schools where the managers create scope for the manifestation of these aspects, the personnel have the liberty to give full effect to their Christian convictions. To them, there is no dualistic view of life. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only true way for them.

Management tasks of a Christian school principal

A school principal is the CEO – chief executive officer – appointed by the parents to ensure on their behalf that their children are educated in the fear of the Lord. The mission established by the school's management body or control board (as representatives of the parent community) must be put into practice by him or her. For example, it is his or her task to ensure that the personnel don't present the learners with a secular worldview, or systematically water down the Christian character of the school's education.

The principal must also structure the school in such a way that the management body can exercise effective control and take informed decisions. For example, it is his or her duty to inform the control board if a newly appointed personnel member experiences difficulty in relating to the Christian character of the school. If the management body has the necessary information, an appropriate programme can be developed to provide support.

With reference to the personnel, learners and parents, it is the task of the school principal to enable them to function as a unit. Everyone concerned knows exactly what the school seeks to achieve, and the nature of his or her critical contribution to the cause. From the gardener who cares for the school's property to the parents who transport learners on an outing, all see their contribution as an important building block in the Christian character-forming of the learners.

A good principal makes time to discuss with his or her personnel, parents and learners any matters that they may deem important. This gives him or her the ability to provide the right normative leadership. Those who see that the principal has their interests at heart, will be happy to listen to his or her advice. But the advice of principals motivated by their own honour will have little impact. Christian principals ought to have a strong service-oriented character.

Management of Christian subject and department heads

The attention of subject- and department heads is more focused on a specific sub-section of the school. The department head for educational guidance will, for example, ensure that the learners make the right subject choices in accordance with their individual talents. Although these heads are responsible for a specific portion of the learners' education, they may never lose sight of the overall purpose of Christian education.

A department head for extracurricular matters can, for example, cause damage to the school's academic programme through his or her conduct. Good communication between subject and department heads is thus of cardinal importance. Personnel are demoralised if they receive conflicting messages from the subject or department head.

For example, it is disturbing when one subject head requires good discipline of his or her personnel, while another subject head adopts a "let it be" approach.

It is the duty of subject and department heads to align their various divisions in a team effort. Under the guidance of the subject and department heads, the personnel must consider how to give practical effect to the school's Christian vision.

Teachers must, for example, know the purpose of a mentorship period and how they can use it to give effect to the school's vision. Subject and department heads must at all times inspire their personnel to persevere with Christian-based instruction.

Everyday challenges such as work pressure, difficult learners and departmental requirements can burden the personnel to such an extent that they lose courage. It is at such times that leadership figures must act with wisdom. By giving the right guidance to the personnel in an encouraging manner, they can help the personnel to look past such difficulties and rather take note of the great wealth of promises God gives in his Word.

For consideration

Consider and discuss the following points with each other:

- What can school principals do to enable the personnel of a Christian school to function together as a unit?
- How can subject and department heads help newly appointed personnel to relate to the unique character of a Christian school?

Chapter 3.8

Christian teachers in non-Christian schools

Objectives

What is the task of teachers who, as Christians, teach in non-Christian schools? This section focuses on the task of Christian teachers in secular schools, and what they can and need to do to give effect in obedience to their calling.

Public schools

The great majority of parents send their children to be educated in public schools. In some cases, such schools claim to be Christian in nature. As proof of this claim, they commence the school day with Scripture reading and close it off with prayer. Some public schools even create the opportunity for Bible instruction periods, or give ministers the opportunity during a mentorship period to discuss moral questions with the learners.

Although Christian parents and teachers must be thankful for every opportunity that learners receive to hear the Word of God against the background noise, they need to realise that such activities – however good they may appear to be – do not amount to the same thing as a truly Bible- and Christ-centred education.

Christian education comprises a lot more than that. Every activity at the school must be based on Biblical norms. God's will is the determining factor in the appointment of personnel, in the development of syllabi, and even in the presentation of extramural activities.

The nature of public schools makes it impossible for them to be fully engaged in Christian education. As state institutions, public schools function, in the first place, in service of the government and not of the parents of their learners.

The question arises as to whether Christian teachers can in any way work in a non-Christian or public school. Are they not disobeying the Lord if, through their work, they help such schools to develop and function? What about non-Christian or public schools which don't see themselves as Christian and which go as far as forbidding the teachers to speak with their learners about God and his Word? Can Christian teachers continue to give effect to their calling in such schools?

According to the Bible, the answer to these and other similar questions is in the affirmative! Just as Biblical figures like Joseph and Daniel were able to perform their daily tasks in secular (even godless) circumstances, so Christian teachers must also do this in worldly schools. However, there rests a great responsibility on such teachers not to neglect their faith, but to present, through their conduct, the image of Jesus Christ to their learners and colleagues.

The teacher as an image bearer of Christ

Christian teachers in a non-Christian or public school need to realise that their conduct might possibly be the only way via which their learners can get to know the Lord. If such teachers think and act in a worldly fashion, they will not be able to exert any formative influence over their learners. They will be like salt that has lost its saltiness and is totally worthless to any and all people.

However, Christian teachers who see and give effect to their task as a calling restore the "salt" to the lives of their colleagues and learners. This they can do by acting, among others, as follows:

- They display a good work ethic in all that they do. Work is not a penance to them, but a joy. They are well prepared for every lesson. Both within and outside of the class

they do far more than is expected of them. Colleagues and learners can see in their conduct that they don't merely work for their salary at the end of the month, but are motivated by something much more significant. Such teachers make a difference in the lives of other persons.

- The relationships they are part of are constructive in nature. They refrain from gossiping about other people or besmirching others' names. How they deal with young people (learners), their equals (colleagues) and their superiors (the school management) testifies to honesty, integrity and humility. Everyone who has anything to do with them can see that they don't place their own interests ahead of all others, but instead consider what is fair, pure, loving and praiseworthy.
- The way in which Christian teachers present their teaching also transmits a certain message. For example, it makes a great impression on learners if the Life Sciences teacher expresses awe at the beauty and magnitude of what they are dealing with. Without the teacher having to say so directly, the learners come to the realisation that the organisms they are studying could not have developed of their own accord. There must have been someone far greater Who created everything so wonderfully.

Teachers who conduct themselves in this manner are like a light on a light-stand that cannot be hidden. They show through their conduct that they are different from the world. Their colleagues, the learners and even the parents cannot but see this and be affected by their conduct. Christian teachers challenge the learners and their colleagues to think more deeply.

The syllabus to be dealt with is always embedded in a certain value system. By putting critical questions to the learners, the teacher can challenge the non-Christian value system and help the learners to look critically at their own convictions.

The presentation of History lends itself outstandingly to this. For example, conflicts between groups or nations are usually presented one-sidedly from a certain point of view, without critically questioning that point of view. Is it right to present the learners with the view that colonialism only left negative consequences in its wake, or that the Allied forces acted honourably at all times during the Second World War?

These and similar questions can help learners to realise that they need an authoritative measure to determine what sort of conduct is right and what is wrong. This measure must, however, be elevated above humankind, since people are by nature inclined to look at things one-sidedly, from their own point of view and inclined to sin.

How certain activities at the school are presented or the way in which instruction takes place must also be critically examined. For example, schools' merit evenings generally focus on those who have received many talents and who thus achieve well. Is this justified?

What about the learner who has received few talents but who has worked just as hard or even harder to obtain an average of 50%? Is it right that the one learner should receive all the honour while another or others receive no acknowledgement? Such questions can also be

asked about the utilisation of leaders, the prescribed books that are dealt with, or the manner in which the school collects funds.

By asking the right questions, Christian teachers can point out their colleagues' incorrect thinking in a diplomatic manner. This must however always be done in such a way that it does not come across as superior or overly righteous. The purpose is, after all, to win those who think differently over to the truth, and not to rap them on the fingers.

To be a bastion for what is good

Christian teachers who are employed in non-Christian schools must seek to positively influence their place of work through their acts and the things they avoid. Just as the work of a Joseph and Daniel was to the benefit of the world in which they lived, so Christian teachers must do likewise.

For example, by providing the learners with a good education, teachers send young people out into society as well-rounded citizens of the country. Such people have learnt what it means to conduct themselves towards other persons in an honest, loyal, hard-working and respectful manner. Even if they don't know the Lord, they are able on the grounds of what they learnt at school to distinguish to a certain extent between right and wrong.

To such learners, that teacher remains an example worth following, one who influenced their lives beneficially. Later on in life it might even happen that they start to ponder that teacher's example in greater depth and thereby come to faith.

What is indeed true, is that non-believers develop respect for believers who demonstrate through their conduct that they are different from a world that prioritises only its own interests. This happened when King Darius glorified God after observing the fruits of faith he saw in Daniel's life. (Daniel 6:26-28) It can likewise happen that learners who see the fruits of faith in their teachers' lives see the hand of God glorified therein.

Remember, God grants faith to those whom He calls. Christian teachers are only instruments in his hand, for application as He sees fit. This knowledge brings peace and serenity to every teacher who seeks to reflect God's image to his or her learners.

Supporting believing learners

There is a significant difference between Christian teachers and the learners in a non-Christian school where the teacher is there to educate and the learner is there to be educated. It moreover makes no sense to expect non-Christian teachers to make learners aware of the secular undercurrents and provide leadership in this connection.

That is why the Lord makes it clear in his Word that He alone is the One Who educates. (Job 36:22, Matthew 23:8-11) Non-believing teachers are unable to properly educate the children of Christian parents. Not in Science, Art, History or in any other subject.

Every subject must testify to God's honour. Those who are not empowered to proclaim this to the learners cannot be allowed to educate Christian children.

In practice, however, many learners from Christian homes land up in public schools. Christian teachers in these schools have a very special responsibility towards these learners and their parents. Wrong conduct must, as far as possible, be pointed out so that parents can correct it at home.

For example, parents must be aware if their children are being taught to look at the economy in a materialistic way. A Christian teacher must also provide a safe haven to believing learners who come to discuss their problems with him or her. It means a great deal to learners who might sometimes be reviled due to their faith by their friends or other teachers if they are able to find consolation with and encouraged to stand firm in their faith by an adult fellow Christian.

Remember

Christian teachers in non-Christian or public schools carry a great responsibility not to neglect their faith, but rather to show through their conduct the image of Jesus Christ to their learners and colleagues.

For consideration

Think critically about the role of Christian teachers in non-Christian or public schools. How can such teachers continue to live out their calling?

- How should Christian teachers apply discipline in such a way that they convey a certain message to the learners?
- How should a Christian teacher in a non-Christian or public school answer a learner who says that religion belongs at home and not at school?
- How can a Christian teacher respond to a colleague who requests him or her to take part in a multi-religious exercise?

Chapter 3.9

Teachers in mission schools

Objectives

To be a teacher in a mission school is no easy task. It is expected of such teachers to proclaim the gospel, over and above their teaching duties. This section focuses on the task and challenges of teachers in mission schools.

The foundational basis of mission schools

The influence that mission schools exert on a community can be very significant. For example, it is said that most countries in South America are mainly Roman Catholic because that church established a large number of mission schools. Churches and mission societies have founded schools not only in South America, but also extensively in Africa and Asia.

Many of these schools not only played a great role in the academic forming of their learners, but also made a significant contribution to the Christianisation of various communities. Many (former) heads of state like Nelson Mandela (in Qunu) and Thabo Mbeki (in Lovedale) count among the well-known persons who received their basic education in such schools. These schools thus exerted a significant influence on their forming and thereby also on society.

Mission schools have the function not only of providing their learners with a good education, but also of proclaiming the Gospel to them. Like missionaries in their own right, the teachers perform this function together with, and in support of, their colleagues in the mission field. Mission schools are based on the extension of the command that Christ gave to his disciples to proclaim the gospel to all peoples and nations.

An important part of this command is that the converts must be taught to sustain and maintain what God taught in his Word. This command applies not only to adults, but also to their children. Those who convert must not only learn of God's redemptory deeds, but also of his will and sovereignty over all fields of life.

This is precisely what mission schools must be engaged in day by day. They teach their learners from a young age not only to see God's hand in everything, but also to obey Him in everything.

Some people hold the view that mission schools can only be established in the isolated outposts of the world. This view does not take into consideration that there might be non-believers in any community who know – or wish to know – little or nothing of God and his Word. From Jesus' missionary command, however, we learn that mission work must in the first place commence with these people.

In practice therefore, mission schools can and must be established for one's own fellow citizens or children living in one's immediate environment. Parents living in poor socio-economic conditions, particularly, have an urgent need for quality education for their children.

This creates scope for Christian churches to establish mission schools within their own communities in support of the church's missionary practices. Teachers in existing Christian schools must support their colleagues in the mission schools by providing them with a Christian curriculum and guidance and, where possible, sharing resources. Believing learners can thereby see from a young age what it means to be actively involved in the proclamation of the gospel.

The task of the teachers

A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of teachers who are called to work in mission schools. Apart from the task of providing their learners with a good academic basis, they also need to attend to the following two aspects:

- Reaching out to the community. The school must be run in such a way that all parents, including non-believing couples, wish to enrol their children in the school. If the teachers demonstrate through their conduct that they are acting rightly towards the learners, this sends a certain message to the community. For example, parents will know that their children will not only receive a high standard of education, but will also be humanely treated. Through the school and the conduct of its personnel, the parents will see what it means to be a Christian. The parents realise, for example, that the purpose of the school is not to make a financial profit, but is instead based on a service motive.
- Through maintaining an open admission policy, many mission schools create for themselves the opportunity to gain access to a community. The positive attitude towards the mission school in the community spills over to the formal missionary work being performed within the community. Scope is thereby created to identify potential mission possibilities that can later be followed up. In practice, parents will be able to see and experience the fruit of the school's education in their children's lives, and become more receptive to grant a mission worker access to their homes.
- Setting an example. Mission schools must be what they say they are: unashamedly Christian. There can be no question of watering down the school's Christian identity for the sake of those who are unsure about their convictions. Learners must, rather, see what it means to live as a believer. There can thus be no alternative to things like opening the school day with Scripture reading and prayer, the singing of hymns, and formal Bible instruction. Parents who send their children to a mission school must be well aware that their children will be exposed to a Christian life and worldview in all facets of the school's functioning.

Telling learners more about the Lord is not the task of the Bible teacher alone. As previously discussed, every teacher must acquaint his or her learners with what the Lord has revealed in and through their particular subject area. Learners must learn that God, through Jesus Christ, not only redeems them from their sinful nature, but also reigns supreme as their King in all spheres of life.

The learners must be able to see that what they learn in theory is also manifested in the teachers' lives. They must be able to see that faith is not merely a sideline thing for believers but that it rules their lives. Teachers who live in the faith will be able to answer learners' concerns about the faith and share their Christian knowledge with them. For such teachers it is a joy to discuss the great deeds of the Lord with their learners.

Cultural sensitivity

In many cases the teachers and learners in mission schools don't share the same cultural background. For example, they might not speak the same language or share the same practices and habits. It can easily happen that, without realising it, the teacher is perceived as looking down upon their learners' culture. In mission schools, as in other schools, this ought not to happen. Christian teachers in mission schools should take extra care that their words and actions are not offensive.

Cultural habits or practices, such as the wearing of school uniforms or requiring a specific form of address in speaking to teachers, must not be elevated to a matter of principle. If this happens, the authority of the Word is undermined because learners must learn to obey only the Biblical norms.

What learners must learn is how to apply these norms within their own cultural context. Boys must, for example, learn to have respect for girls (women). How this should be done can differ from community to community.

It is important that teachers in mission schools must adapt the instruction they give to the cultural circumstances of the learners. For example, there is no sense if the History teacher teaches European history – and not African history – in settings where the learners live in Africa.

What teachers must teach their learners is how to test their cultural beliefs in the light of God's Word. Thereby the learners are enabled to distinguish between right and wrong. Teachers who do this equip their learners to become "salt" and "light" in their own communities.

Preparing teachers

Those who think that teaching in mission schools is inferior and can be left to untrained persons are greatly mistaken. On the contrary, performing this task requires a particularly well equipped teacher. Over and above the need for educational qualifications, such teachers also need to immerse themselves in the cultural context within which they work.

For example, if teachers don't have the necessary cultural sensitivity, there is a strong chance that their learners will regard them as alien to their world, and inaccessible. In addition, teachers must also learn how to proclaim the gospel to the learners in an appropriate manner. Much reflection and great carefulness are needed to explain such things as the covenant or predestination to learners who have little or no Biblical knowledge.

The ideal is that particularly those who wish to teach in mission schools in a different country should first undergo a formal orientation course regarding what lies before them. If this is not done, the unexpected conditions that such teachers experience can be overwhelming. Not only are they far from home, but also in a totally new environment with no friends or family to encourage or support them. No wonder the personnel turnover in mission schools is so high!

It is helpful, however, if local inhabitants are able to give advice to prospective teachers about the type of food that they eat, their social activities, the infrastructure at their disposal, and so on. Thereby they gain a good idea about what to expect.

It is equally important that an experienced mission worker should come and provide information about what is expected of the teachers and how their tasks fit into the mission project as a whole. This can help prevent teachers from entertaining idealistic expectations that are not in line with the hard work they will have to face. For properly prepared and well-equipped teachers, however, it is a wonderful privilege to be able to contribute in this way to the extension of God's kingdom.

For consideration

- It is no easy task to proclaim the gospel to learners who have little or no Bible knowledge. Discuss, in group context, how you believe this might best be done.
- Together with one or two colleagues, write a paragraph of less than 120 words on the task and challenges of teachers in mission schools.

Chapter 3.10

Self-assessment

Objectives

Throughout the Bible the Lord calls upon believers to critically examine their own practices. They need to determine whether they have not perhaps drifted away from the paths set by the Lord. This principle also applies to organisations such as Christian schools. This section will focus on the ways schools and teachers can undertake self-assessment with an eye to obedience in serving the Lord.

The need for self-assessment

By nature, people wish to be the centre-point of all that is going on around them. Our sinful selves are happy if other people have a high regard for us or go to the effort of serving us. For example, learners enjoy receiving recognition for their achievements, whether as seen by their teachers or their fellow learners. They hate being criticised or corrected by those around them.

We see this same attitude in school communities more broadly. School communities generally don't like criticism, especially when outsiders make negative comments about how things are done. They believe that they are doing things right and don't want to hear a different opinion from someone else.

The craving for recognition is so strong that some teachers are blind even to their own faults. For example, a teacher will not easily accept that he or she has acted unreasonably towards his or her learners, even if it is obvious that that did indeed happen.

Jesus Christ was well aware of humankind's tendency to self-justification, and thus He warned us to take the plank out of our own eye before trying to remove the splinter in someone else's eye. (Matthews 7:3-5) Critical self-examination is the basis of true faith. Believers can, after all, repent of their own sinful deeds only if they are aware of the scale of their unrighteousness.

The same principle applies to Christian schools. Schools and their teachers must thus continually rate themselves by the measuring stick of God's Word to determine whether they are still obediently serving the Lord. Although each Christian teacher should personally undertake self-assessment on a daily basis, it is also essential that the personnel assess jointly how the school is doing from a Biblical point of view.

Ten characteristics of Christian schools

The following ten characteristics can serve as a useful guideline for Christian schools and teachers who wish to test their own conduct in the light of God's Word:

- One: The Word of God is central to all activities that take place at the school. Biblical norms determine not only what the personnel and learners are engaged in, but also how they carry it out. The following questions, among others, come to the fore in this:
 - Are Biblical norms the determining factor in the school's admission policy, the appointment of personnel and the presentation of extramural activities?
 - Are the learners taught what is proclaimed by God in his Word?
 - Is the school managed according to Biblical norms?
 - Is provision made in the school timetable for the presentation of Bible instruction?
 - Do learners and personnel regularly receive the opportunity to be exposed to the requirements of the Word?

- Two: All teaching takes place from a Christ-centric life and worldview. God the Father gave Jesus Christ all power in heaven and on earth. All teaching and education must be instrumental to his kingdom and in accordance with the Lord's will. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Do the learners learn to subject themselves willingly and with dedication to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ?
 - Do the learners stand in awe at the hand of the Lord in every subject area?
 - Does the education methodology the teachers follow accord with the Christian character of the syllabus?
 - Do the teachers realise that they serve as instruments in the service of Jesus Christ?
 - Are the learners equipped to organise their lives according to Biblical norms?

- Three: The personnel are excited about being able to serve the Lord. The attitude by way of which they perform their task testifies that it is a joy to them to be able to give effect to their calling. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Do the personnel strive actively to give effect to the school's vision?
 - Do the teachers perform their daily task with dedication and enthusiasm?
 - Are the learners able to see in their teachers' conduct that they live out their lives in childlike obedience to the Lord?
 - Are the personnel prepared to do more than what is expected of them?
 - Is it a joy for the teachers to work with the learners?

- Four: The personnel go to the effort of enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the Word. Teachers seek jointly, but also separately, for the Lord's will in Scripture and in his works. The following questions come to the fore here:
 - Do the personnel make sure their understanding of God's Word leads to personal growth in their faith through regular family devotions, Bible study and attendance of church services?

- Do the personnel meet regularly to consider the nature and character of the school and how to give practical effect to it?
 - Do the personnel take note of each others' learning and lives by encouraging and cautioning each other, and by correcting each other where necessary?
 - Do the personnel go to the effort to know more about Christian education?
 - Do the personnel liaise with believing teachers in other Christian schools?
- Five: The teachers are constructively involved with the learners in group contexts, but also with each learner individually. The personnel realise that although the learners are broken sinners, they are still image bearers of God. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Besides their normal daily tasks, do the teachers get involved in the well-being and challenges of their learners?
 - Does the school maintain a sound balance between academic and extracurricular activities?
 - Are structures in place to detect learners who are experiencing personal or spiritual challenges?
 - Is sufficient opportunity created for the learners to develop their talents on the academic, sporting, cultural and social levels?
 - Do the learners learn how to apply their gifts to the honour of the Lord and the benefit of their fellow people?
- Six: The teachers help the learners to become true disciples of Jesus Christ. This is the core task of Christian schools. Christian schools that don't engage herein are missing the reason for their existence. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Are the learners growing in their knowledge of and trust in the Lord?
 - Do the learners stand in awe when observing God's great deeds in every subject area?
 - Do the learners show a Christian way of life in their behaviour?
 - Are the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as humility, love and self-control discernible in the learners' lives?
 - Do the learners serve the Lord in full surrender and with a warm heart?
 - Are the learners filled with thankfulness and joy to be able to be a child of the Lord?
- Seven: The school is characterised by good order and discipline. Effective teaching can take place only if both the teachers and learners practise good discipline and do what is expected of them. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Do teachers and learners practise mutual respect towards each other?
 - Is a sound work and learning culture present at the school?
 - Are school rules clearly set out so that learners know what is expected of them?
 - Do the learners learn to subject themselves to all authority?
 - Are learners who contravene the rules treated firmly but with love?

- Are those who repeatedly disrupt classes or disadvantage other learners removed from the school?
- Eight: Christian schools maintain a close link with the learners' parents. Parents are no threat to teachers, but are involved as partners in the education of the learners. Thereby the school is an extension of the parental home. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Does the teaching that learners receive in their parental homes resonate with what they learn at school?
 - Is there regular communication with the parents about their children's progress at school?
 - Are parents involved in a meaningful way in the presentation of the school's Christian character?
 - Is there open contact between teachers and parents to discuss matters relating to the education of the learners?
- Nine: Christian schools maintain a correct relationship with the government as well as with the community within which they function. Learners must learn to live in the world without becoming worldly in the process. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Does the Christian school slavishly follow the government's prescribed curriculum, or do the teachers develop their own Christian curriculum along Biblical lines?
 - Do learners learn to distinguish between various life and world views and apply the correct Christian values?
 - Do the teachers and learners subject themselves to the government in everything that is true and right?
 - Are the learners properly equipped to comply with their missionary command in the community?
 - Do learners, parents and teachers realise that believers take their place in the world in ways totally different from those of non-believers?
- Ten: Christian schools equip their learners to be able to give full effect to their calling in the world. The teaching and education that learners receive equips them to be able to take their place in society as well prepared adults. The following questions come to the fore:
 - Is the education that learners receive relevant and applicable to the world in which they live?
 - Do learners learn to give well-balanced effect to their calling in all spheres of society?
 - Are learners equipped to resist and fight off the cunning onslaughts of Satan, the attractions of the world and their own sinful nature?

The value of self-assessment

Self-analysis not only indicates shortcomings, but also provides reasons for great thankfulness. Thereby Christian teachers, parents and learners see in visible form how the Lord does not relinquish the work of his hands but continues it with and through those who fear Him. If teachers perceive God's protecting hand in their lives and schools, they cannot but praise Him for all his deeds.

For consideration

Divide into groups of not more than four persons. Think critically along the lines of the above ten points. In which areas might the school at which you teach be improved?

- Do you spend the right time on the right things?
- What things deflect the attention of your personnel or school from the things that you should be doing?
- Do you still serve the Lord with as much zeal now as you perhaps did at an earlier point in your life?

Part 4

Subject approaches for primary and secondary teachers

Chapter 4.1 God's revelation in every subject

Objectives

God proclaims Himself to humankind in two ways: in the first place through his works, and secondly in greater detail by way of his Word. Teachers need to acquaint themselves closely with what God has revealed about their subject area in order to convey it properly to their learners.

Christian education

Some Christian teachers consider it impossible to present their subject area from within a Christian reference framework. They are concerned that learners might end up resisting the faith if it is enforced upon them by way of mini-sermons. They consequently believe that faith and science should be kept separate from each other.

Such teachers believe that faith belongs in the church and at home where parents must teach their children about the truths of Scripture. Schools, so they believe, ought to focus on what is demonstrable, or “scientifically proven”. According to this view it is better to keep faith out of schools since it would place science in a subjective light.

Other teachers, by contrast, believe that Christians can and must live out their faith also in teaching. They believe that it is correct if the school principal or a teacher opens the day with Bible reading and prayer and closes it off again in the afternoon by way of a communal prayer in the classroom.

Many Christian schools also make provision in their timetables for a Bible period or two so that learners can get to know the Lord and his Word better. Learners may be treated fairly and scolding or swearing at the children are conscientiously avoided.

The above aspects are important and it is good and well if schools pay attention to them, but does this conduct make the institution a Christian school?

God's Word – not the views of parents or teachers – determines how believers must raise their children and have them educated. According to the Scriptures, God is King over all facets of life, (Psalm 24:1, Matthews 28:18) and thus also the teaching and education of children.

Both the classroom and extracurricular activities must testify to God's will. Christian teaching is not just another aspect in the daily activities of a school. It determines everything that happens.

Unlike the unbelieving world, the school community that realises this will closely consider how the school is managed, its teachers appointed and its learners handled. Such a school will also look closely at how every subject area is handled. God reveals Himself in the first place through his works.

When Adam and Eve were created, there was no Bible through which they could get to know God. Adam as the head had to study God's works of creation in order to give names to all the animals of the field and birds of the air. Thereby he got to know God's omnipotence and care.

Like Adam, teachers continue to engage themselves in this commandment. Every subject area at school forms a part of God's creational works that need to be studied. Just as Adam had to name the animals, so a teacher also describes his or her subject area for his or her learners.

It is no easy task to name things correctly according to the way God created them. Thoroughly studying the Bible alongside one's subject area is a prerequisite if you wish to succeed in this task. A Christian teacher cannot afford to shy away from his or her duties. Considerable prayer and research is required to detect what God reveals in your subject area.

A Christian teacher must learn to detect God's hand in everything

Paul explains in his Epistle to the Romans that God's hand is clearly discernible in his creational works (ch 1:20) There is thus no excuse for any person to claim that he or she has never had anything to do with God. Paul associates himself with David's psalms which say that the firmament proclaims the honour of God. God's Name is above that of everything else.

A Christian teacher must see God's hand in every portion of the creation that he or she studies, and convey it to the learners. It is God who grants humankind with the means and ability to create culture.

The glory of God's works is, for example, clearly discernible in every beautiful piece of music that a music teacher teaches to a learner, and in every well-formulated poem that a teacher recites in the classroom. It's like a gradually opening rosebud: the more you are able to see, the more you stand in awe at the creative power, means and abilities of God.

How to look at God's works

When something is revealed or announced, this presupposes that there is someone who already knows, or a being that knows everything. The Lord wants humankind to realise that He is the one and only Almighty God. (Genesis 17:1, Romans 3:30, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

For this reason, He uses ordinary (sinful) people as instruments to convey the knowledge and insight of his works and Word to the next generation.

The Christian teacher who realises this, has to become an instrument in God's hands to relate God's will in the subject area of the teacher's specialization to his or her learners.

For example, when learners are studying the various systems of the human body in Life Sciences, the teacher must point out how marvellously God created the human body. They must also learn from Scripture (Psalm 139) that it was God who already formed the body so masterfully in the mother's womb.

There are, unfortunately, many teachers who knowingly or unknowingly do not see God's hand in their subject area. When this happens, an erroneous view arises concerning the syllabus being handled. The following concerns are pertinent:

- Some teachers believe that portentous powers exist in nature. They believe, for example, that the position of the stars in the heavens determines your future. A Christian physical science teacher is not concerned with such things as astrology. He or she would rather refer the learners to the sublimity of the Creator as evident in creation.
- Other teachers over-emphasise or idolise nature. A teacher who believes that animals are equal to humans, misunderstands the unique position that God bestowed on humankind. A Christian Natural Sciences teacher would rather explain, in dealing with God's creational order, why humans cannot be classified as mammals.
- There are, unfortunately, also many Christian teachers who regard God's works as temporary and inferior. In dying on the cross, Jesus Christ reconciled all of creation with God, not only human souls. He brought a new heaven and earth into being.

To a Christian teacher, God's works never cease to proclaim his honour. Every atom, every organism, every beautiful work of art, every mathematical rule and every important event that takes place, proclaims without pause the eternal power and divinity of God. Like a mighty choir, God's honour is proclaimed in everything.

It is thus that teachers are always excited when they come across something new in their subject area. The patriarch Abram was able to see the richness of God's promise by looking up at the heavens and considering the stars.

With the help of today's telescopes, we are so much better able to see and understand the immensity of this promise. Are you yourself excited and do you teach your learners to view God's creational works with excitement, or has your subject area become a cold and lifeless field of knowledge without God?

Remember, learners will stand in awe of the contents of a subject area only if the teacher is also in awe. For as Jesus Christ taught, a learner follows in the footsteps of his or her teacher.

Your task is to explain clearly to your learners what God reveals in your subject area.

The teacher's task in every subject area

God reveals certain principles in every subject area that are foundational to human, and thus also to each and every learner's life. In Economic Sciences it is God's care for humankind that takes centre stage, whereas in Physical teaching learners are taught how to take care of their bodies and apply them in serving God and fellow people.

All the subjects together form a unity that testifies to God's omnipotence. Art or Mathematics may thus not be in conflict with what learners are taught during the Bible periods. The authority of Scripture is undermined if the Bible teacher reads from the Bible that God created all things, whereas in another class, the Life Sciences teacher tells the learners that all things originated in the so-called Big Bang.

Teachers may also not conceal certain subjects from their learners wherein God clearly reveals something. For example, God reveals that it is He who gives life. A Biology or Social Sciences teacher must therefore discuss this with his or her learners when dealing with the properties of living and non-living things.

No teacher can or may leave God out of, or separate Him, from his works. Remember, a teacher can also alienate a learner from the Lord by teaching nothing about the Lord. Christ warned that such persons will one day have to give account for their deeds.

A good teacher will ensure that no dualism arises between what God reveals in the Bible and what he (the teacher) teaches in his subject area. If this were to happen, either the Bible is not being correctly read, or human thought on the matter falls short. In such a case, more prayer is required to gain insight, as well as study and research.

Learners must be taught from an early age that it is the same God who reveals Himself through his creational works and in the Bible. The Bible and science cannot contradict each other, because God does not contradict Himself.

There can thus also not be any thought of something like a neutral science. God is the King of all spheres of life, including all sciences. The teacher who understands this will be attuned to see the hand of the Lord in his subject area, and pass this on to the learners in his or her class.

For consideration

Discuss the following questions in a group context:

1. What norms does God reveal to humankind in your subject area?
2. Are there any aspects in your subject area about which God speaks in his Word?
3. How can you equip yourself to increase your knowledge concerning that which God has revealed about your subject area?

Chapter 4.2

Languages

Objectives

The train of events surrounding creation commenced when God spoke. Through his words, He not only brought all things into existence, but He also began to make himself known to humankind. A few thousand years later God became flesh in Christ. He came to teach us the will of his heavenly Father. Teachers need to realise that language is far more than just a means of communication. God uses language as an instrument to make Himself known to us in greater detail.

Words have meaning

Many people think that language is just a means of communication. To them, language is the means whereby a person asks for help or tells something about what happened. They think that the purpose of a language is to communicate with other persons as effectively as possible.

This belief is emphasised particularly by the so-called SMS (Short Message System) language. Language rules are ignored in the interests of rapid communication. The pleasant use of language is no longer an object in itself, as long as the message is transmitted as rapidly as possible.

This view is also encountered in teaching. Language instruction focuses particularly on the applicability of a language, or "language in context", as it is generally known. Learners must be able to read fluently and be able to make practical summaries of what they have read, take notes, or write a letter.

All of these aspects are, of course, very important and they need to be properly taught, but are these the only aspects a language teacher needs to give attention to? Isn't there a lot more to language than simply conveying a message or story?

To a Christian teacher, language is in the first place a gift of the Lord through which, besides his creational works, God proclaims Himself. The Bible, God's written Word, contains everything that a person needs in order to know and trust in Him (2 Timothy 3:14-17), given that the right meaning is attached to his words. We may not interpret the Bible's words simply as we see fit.

God's words exist in permanency. They convey an unchangeable meaning. If God teaches that the word "love" always implies what is good and right, we may not dilute and change it to make it some soppy Hollywood story which is something quite different from Biblical love.

God further emphasises that names, particularly his Name, have a meaning. A name has everything to do with the identity of a person or an object.

For example, Adam received a command to give names to all the animals according to their characteristics. (Genesis 2:19,20) In essence, teachers still continue to be engaged in this command. You, too, make certain things known to your learners in your subject area. But you need to make very sure that you describe your syllabus correctly as God intended it.

A teacher who understands this principle would teach his learners to go about using their words with great care. Learners must become aware of the precise meaning of the words that they use.

This applies particularly to words such as reconciliation, forgiveness, justice and tolerance – words which are often used by unbelievers in a distorted, unbiblical way. Learners must acquire the skill to read and listen critically and be able to identify misconceptions and wrongs perpetrated by means of words.

Sanctify language to the honour of God

God grants people the ability to be able to communicate with Him and other persons by means of language. You learn by means of language to know the world in which you live and how to maintain yourself within it. More importantly, you learn to know and understand your calling in life and what is required to carry out your commission.

For example, a mathematics teacher teaches the learners in his or her class to master certain mathematical calculations. Thereby he or she equips future engineers, accountants or housewives to live out their calling when they reach adulthood. Learners thereby learn from a young age how to inhabit, utilise and conserve the earth to the honour of God in their working life.

Critically examine the context of language

Not only the language through which you learn, but also the language itself must be sanctified to the honour of God. The words that you use must be gratifying to God. Persons who swear, libel or gossip do not sanctify the language that God gave them, but instead promote Satan's kingdom. It is not for nothing that the apostle James warned that the tongue can be a fire ignited from hell.

Learners must be taught not to make themselves guilty of such things. Your language, like all other aspects of culture, is a gift from God and must therefore be applied in his service. You as the teacher will thus not make a disparaging joke about the authorities or some other body or person, but rather use your words to cherish and praise God.

This has far-reaching implications for the language teacher. Do you teach your learners to use their language to the honour of God? What is the subject of the reading material, comprehension tests or poems that you give to your learners? Does it testify to things that

are true, honourable, just, pure and loving, or does it pander to the crazes of pop and film stars?

And what is the language style of the tracts concerned? Are the words tastefully presented or are they used in a defamatory manner? Do you take the opportunity to discuss with your learners what it means to use your language to the honour of God? The teacher who does this, generates in his or her learners the awareness to look critically at the text of their reading material or listen attentively to the words of a song or poem.

The variety of languages and mother tongue teaching

God's creational works form a unity, and yet they reveal a diversity that brings the intricacy of his wisdom to the fore. The variety of languages presents a beautiful example of the astounding diversity apparent in God's created order.

All people are created from one blood, and are therefore equal before God the Creator, irrespective of race, gender or language. And yet He caused many languages to come into existence. Multilingualism is today no longer only a curse as some people think, but rather form part of the unity and diversity of the reality of God's creation, although also reflecting the brokenness and sinfulness of the human condition.

No language ought to be elevated above another. All forms of language superiority, language imperialism or language snobbishness must therefore be rejected as unscriptural. What this means in practice is that we may not look down upon a person who speaks another language.

A specific language may also not be overemphasised. This happens if you are so focused on the preservation of your own language that you no longer see the need for persons who belong to another language community to receive the Gospel.

There is definitely scriptural scope for mother tongue teaching, provided that it is not based on an attitude of superiority. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, everyone heard the gospel in their own language. (Acts 2:8) The Lord did not compel everyone to understand one language, but instead proclaimed the Glad Tidings in a variety of languages.

This point of departure still applies today. Learners should be able to learn in their mother tongue how God revealed Himself in all spheres, including in every subject area at school. Parents who have their children educated in a second language often deprive them of the benefit of learning more about God and his works in the language that they understand best.

A mother tongue teacher who understands these principles will cultivate a love in his or her pupils for their mother tongue. Not because the language is so beautiful or has such a rich history, but because it is a gift from God. Whichever language you teach, there will be a way to describe God's works and greatness using that language. Explain to your learners the meaning of words such as blessedness, compassion and loving-kindness.

Point out to them the order and structure that is unique to that language. But teach them also that other languages, too, are gifts from the Lord and thus need to be treated with the necessary regard and respect. Children who come to understand this won't be inclined to misuse God's name.

For consideration

Think critically about the various texts available on the market for use in your class.

- Are the subjects concerned constructive in nature?
- Does their use of language testify to good taste?

Which texts will you definitely not prescribe? Motivate your answer.

Chapter 4.3

Mathematics

Objectives

God reveals Himself in the first place through his works and thereafter in more detail in his Word. Mathematics is one of the subject areas wherein God reveals the miraculous logic and indisputable complexity of his creation. Teachers must know the various aspects that God reveals of his being through mathematics, and they must know how to convey these truths to their learners.

Is Mathematics just mathematics?

One sometimes hears a teacher or learner remark that Mathematics is just mathematics. Two plus two makes four and you can neither add to nor take anything away from such a logical calculation. Mathematics, so they claim, is neutral and has nothing to do with religion and faith. A Mathematics class, whether it be presented from a pragmatic, humanistic or Christian life and world view, is precisely the same. The Bible, such teachers or learners hold, has nothing to say about mathematics. However, nothing can be less true than this view.

In certain cases modern Mathematics has even contributed to the undermining of Christianity. The world – certain mathematicians claim – is controlled by mathematical laws. It is not God, but these laws that determine what happens. According to their view, God's Word is riddled with mathematical untruths.

For example, such scholars claim that it makes no mathematical sense that five loaves and two fishes can be multiplied into twelve baskets of leftovers after 5 000 persons have eaten their fill. Thereby these critics question Jesus' miracles and decry them as untrue.

Christian teachers also find it difficult to integrate mathematics into their Christian faith. In a bid to do this, certain teachers will make use of general Scriptural truths to give a Biblical flavour to their subject.

A teacher will, for example, ask his or her learners how many animals were in the Ark if one looks at two elephants, two lions and two baboons. Teachers who deal with the Bible in such a way can, without intending it, degrade the authority of the Scriptures despite their earnest intention to apply Christian education.

The nature of Mathematics gained a new and deeper meaning in the middle of the 17th century when mathematicians such as Newton, Leibniz and Pascal instituted infinitesimal calculation, known as calculus. Through their work, mathematics changed into the study of numbers, form, movement, change and space.

This enabled humankind, to a much greater extent than previously, to act as stewards of God's creation and promote an understanding of it. The answer to the question: "What is mathematics?" must thus be as follows: "Mathematics is a science of numbers and forms via which humankind contributes to the understanding of God's creation, until infinity."

What God reveals of Himself through Mathematics

Christian education is always normative. This also applies to Mathematics. In brief, it means that God brings to the fore certain general norms in all of the different subject areas. Principles such as God's providence, his omnipotence and his love help us not only to get to know Him better, but also to place our trust in Him.

A Christian Mathematics teacher must thus continually attempt to find out what principles God reveals to us in and through the creation of mathematics.

In its essence, Mathematics deals with truth. Mathematicians know that tenets such as $2 + 3 = 5$ are universally and generally valid. These mathematical truths were not invented by human reasoning, since they have existed throughout eternity. Mathematical laws are thus simply discovered, not devised or developed.

The church father Augustine (354–430 AD) understood this principle well by linking these laws to God's being. He rightly pointed out that eternal truths cannot be developed by mortal men, but only by God.

It is important that learners in a Mathematics class have a good understanding of this principle. Mathematics functions on the basis of its divine origin. The Lord not only laid down these laws in his creation, but also maintains them. Thus the mathematical law that there are 360 degrees in a circle is always valid.

Although a Mathematics teacher might not need to reiterate this aspect to the learners in every lesson, it is nevertheless good for the teacher to discuss it with his or her learners and to remind them thereof from time to time. This and other mathematical laws are not "natural laws" that people discovered through observation and rational scientific work, but mathematical patterns via which God maintains his creation. By contrast, atheist mathematicians take the view that mathematics was invented out of nothing.

Mathematics provides certainty

If Mathematics was merely a product of human reasoning, it would not have been able to provide any certainty in life. As with the development of the theory of evolution, a new scientist would be able to develop a new theory that overthrows all existing mathematical thought and insights.

But this cannot be. Mathematics provides certainty in a world in which almost everything has become relative and thus uncertain. Today's people question everything that was held to be true yesterday. In contrast to this temporal spirit of relativism, the mathematical laws the Lord created are proof of his unchanging being.

You can be absolutely certain mathematically that the number eight cannot simultaneously be nine. This unchangeability not only provides certainty but also demonstrates the order in God's creation. It tells us more of his wisdom, consistency and trustworthiness.

Engineers are thus able to calculate precisely how to construct a bridge or calculate the water pressure that a dam wall needs to be able to withstand. The hand of the Lord is clearly discernible behind this order and certainty. For example, Fermat's final tenet was only proved in 1994 – after having been accepted by people for more than 300 years.

A Mathematics teacher must regularly point out God's established order to his or her learners, so that they can perceive it as a gift from his hand, to be respected and valued. If it had not been for his eternal, unchanging being, such things as mathematical certainty could not have existed.

It is God who ensures that there are 24 hours in the day and that every hour consists of 60 minutes, each of which has 60 seconds. The learner who realises this does not experience mathematical laws as simply coincidental to our daily lives. On the contrary, he or she sees the greatness of God in the order He established.

Applicability of Mathematics

The interdependence of all things finds its origin in God who created all things. No subject area can thus be studied independently of any other. This applies to Mathematics as well. It has direct application to virtually all spheres of life, from the housewife who buys a litre of milk in the supermarket, to the group of scientists working together on complicated weather forecasting models.

Indeed, in aspects where fields of Mathematics such as abstract Algebra would apparently have no application, the limited knowledge of humankind becomes embarrassingly clear when, against all expectations, a practical application is discovered.

The field of application was, of course, always there – and this exposes the lack on the side of humankind; not any shortcoming of God or his mathematics. Learners can be taught about these norms which God reveals through mathematics.

At school level, mathematics focuses particularly on two aspects of the creation, namely numbers (arithmetical and algebraic) and space (geometry). Through the study of these subjects, learners develop their capacity for logical thinking and reasoning.

Learners can, on the basis of the principles of order that God laid down in his creation, analytically evaluate and solve problems. Mathematics literally provides learners with insight on how to plan their school day, how to manage their monetary affairs and even how to get on meaningfully with other people.

All educators, from the primary school teacher who is teaching children how to count, to the university professor who is teaching applied Mathematics, must strive to inculcate a love for the subject in their learners. Learners who are able to discern the place and role of

mathematics in creation will not only develop a love for the subject but also see the greatness of God who interwove all things, including mathematics, in such a precise way.

God's hand in science was clearly discernible to the great mathematical masters such as Newton and Pascal. It is now your task, as a Christian teacher, to demonstrate this to the next generation.

For consideration

Divide into groups of four persons. Discuss how you will explain to children how mathematics brings the following aspects of God's work to the fore.

1. God's wisdom
2. God's trustworthiness
3. God's order

Chapter 4.4

Natural sciences

Objectives

God makes Himself known to humankind in the first place through his works. By studying creation, we get to know God as the Creator and Keeper of all things. Teachers of physical education, life sciences and natural sciences must properly acquaint themselves with what God reveals of his order, omnipotence and wisdom in their subject areas. The learners must be guided in such a way that they not only come to see God's hand in all of creation, but also honour Him as the King of all created things.

Natural sciences as a field of study

We as Christians have the glorious privilege of knowing that God reveals Himself to us through his works. This knowledge places a responsibility on every Christian teacher to present his or her subject or area of learning to the honour and glorification of God.

This involves a lot more than simply quoting a Bible verse or presenting a lesson on morals during one or another class. The syllabus and the way in which it is presented must be of such a nature that it testifies to God as the Creator and Keeper of all things. (Psalm 148:6)

The natural sciences as a field of study is as old as humankind itself. Even prior to the Fall of Man, God gave Adam the command to give names to all the birds of the heavens and the wild animals of the field. (Genesis 2:19,20) The natural sciences teacher is still directly engaged in this task. As with Adam, we study the reality that God created, and describe it to our learners.

The description (or instruction) must be done in such a way that God's hand comes clearly to the fore in his works. The learners of a teacher who presents his subject area in such a way will be amazed at the great deeds of God in every theme that is dealt with.

God reveals Himself through his creation

There are, unfortunately, many scientists who do not wish to acknowledge God as the Creator and Keeper of all things. As a result they develop all sorts of theories in a bid to prove that the natural sciences should be studied without any thought of God. Human thinking is elevated by such scientists (and teachers) to the level of absolute truth, and no room is left for God's revelation.

The teaching of evolution in Life Sciences, Grades 10 to 12 harbours just such a danger. Teachers who teach their learners under the banner of "scientific proof" that God was not involved in the creation of the world and the maintenance of all things are thereby acting

foolishly. Such teachers forget that human theories (such as the theory of evolution) come and go over the years. What today is regarded as firm and certain, is repudiated tomorrow by new research. Although Life Sciences learners need to know the theory of evolution like the backs of their hands, they also need to learn how to evaluate it from the standpoint of God's revelation.

The presentation of Physical Education

Learners in the foundation phase must learn in Physical Education that their bodies are not only precious in the eyes of the Lord, but that they must also serve God and their fellow people with their bodies. The following subjects lend themselves to discussion with the learners in this respect:

- In dealing with the body, the teacher must point out the wonder of the human body to the learners. Tell your learners how every system in the body performs a unique function, and yet cooperates with other systems to enable the body to function as required. One can also point out that the Bible uses the body as an example of the way in which the Church of Christ is to function.
- The teacher can, on occasion, ask the learners to consider how they can be of service to their parents or friends with their bodies. Learners must realise that a healthy lifestyle sets one up to live out one's calling to better effect. Also point out to your learners that it is a misperception to think that their bodies belong to themselves and that they can therefore do with their bodies whatever they wish. A Christian is better advised to care for and clothe his or her body properly.
- Discussion of the sense organs presents a golden opportunity to speak to the learners about how they can use or misuse their sense organs. Give practical examples that apply to learners' life experiences and development level. Grade 3 learners, for example, will understand that a person can use their eyes to read the Bible, but also to spy out what is available to be stolen. Children must realise that their body is a temple of the Lord and that they must therefore use it to his honour.

The presentation of Life Sciences

In teaching Botany, Zoology and Anatomy, a Christian teacher must focus the learners' attention on what we can learn from God in the study of the following subjects:

- Many countries host a great variety of plants and animals. All of these illustrate the omnipotence and beauty of God's creation. Learners must, in dealing with the various organisms, learn not only to praise and honour God for it, but also to meet their responsibility as stewards of God's creation.
- The complexity and interdependence by way of which organisms live are indicative of the order and structure God laid down in his creation. In dealing with the food

chain, for example, learners must realise that God created every living organism functionally in order to play a specific role in creation.

- Although a cat, a whale and a bat are classified together with the human being as mammals on the basis of their anatomy, there is a significant difference between man and animal. In contrast to animals which take care of their young instinctively, God gave human beings the intellect to take decisions concerning the teaching of their children. This is because God breathed the "breath of life" only in humankind's nose. Learners must know that although humankind was created as an earthly being on the sixth day, humanity was created in God's image, whereas animals were not. A human being can thus not be classified as an animal purely on the basis of his anatomy.

Like the author of Psalm 8, children must also learn to stand in awe in regards to how God so artfully created the human body. A learner who understands this will cherish and take care of his or her body. He or she will also deal with his own and other persons' bodies to promote the upliftment of their fellow people and the glorification of God.

The presentation of the Physical Sciences

Physics and Chemistry focus on the laws God laid down in his creation. A Christian teacher will point out to his or her learners the orderly structure and beauty that God established through laws such as the law of gravity. Learners must realise that humankind can observe these laws by means of experiments, but that it is God's eternal power that keeps them in place.

Point out to your learners also that God, as the Creator of all laws, is not Himself subject to them. It was thus that God was able to move the sun ten degrees backwards in response to the prayer of the prophet Isaiah (ch 38:8), and enable the Lord Jesus to walk on water to his disciples. (Matthew 14:25)

In Chemistry class learners must be able to see how God equipped humankind to carry out its cultural mandate by means of chemical processes. Developments in the field of chemistry have made it possible for people to increase food production and improve family care, among other things. God thereby gives humankind the means to enhance the lives of ourselves and our fellow people.

There are, unfortunately, also persons who apply discoveries in the chemical field to the disadvantage of humankind and of nature. It is thus also important for learners to carefully think about how people use chemical discoveries, such as that of chlorine gas.

In Physics class, learners study the forces operative in nature. Learners must realise that through forces such as electricity, God made it possible for humankind to enhance our limited capacity. Christian scientists can thereby give effect to God's cultural command to work the earth.

Just as learners need to learn to apply chemical processes to the honour of God in Chemistry class, so they also need to learn this in Physics class. Put questions to the learners regularly to stimulate their thinking in this regard. Point out to them that God is not only the Creator of all things, but also the Author of the Bible. That which you teach in the Physics class and that which God's Word says can never contradict each other.

For consideration

Make a poster or posters via which to inform your learners of the wrong and right approaches to the natural sciences. The following structure can be of help to you:

1. Assemble the necessary information, including relevant Bible texts
2. Plan the design of the poster(s)
3. Make the poster(s)
4. Affix the poster(s) in the classroom in full view of the learners

Chapter 4.5

Economic sciences

Objectives

God appointed humankind as stewards to work and conserve his creation. It is clear from Scripture (Romans 14:12) that everyone will one day have to account for how he or she utilised the means that God provided them. Teachers must know what is involved in responsible stewardship and how to convey these truths to their learners.

What kind of world do we live in?

Money plays a central role in most people's lives. Many parents drive themselves hard in order to earn an income to maintain a high standard of living. A good salary, so they believe, will ensure happiness for them. This will determine their luxury status as indicated by their car, the size of their house and where they can go on vacation.

Children are urged from a young age to choose an occupation that will generate a good income. Many learners take extra Mathematics and Science classes in an effort to gain admission to studies that promise a large salary. A good salary, so many parents believe, will ensure a good and prosperous life for their children.

We encounter the same attitude among many teachers. Learners are motivated to work hard in order to make a great success of their futures in terms of finance and material goods. Money fever becomes the measure by which everything is judged. Subjects such as Latin or History which offer no direct financial advantage to a learner are less attractive. In certain cases learners may even be discouraged from taking part in activities apart from those that can potentially help to generate a good income.

The Lord as provider and keeper

The focus on "making money" also comes to the fore in the curriculum. Learners must acquire entrepreneurial skills with only one thing in mind: to make as much profit as possible. At those schools where 'entrepreneur days' are held, the learner who makes the greatest profit receives a bit of extra money as reward. All these things lead learners to think that the pursuit of money is the most important thing in life.

It is not easy for a Christian teacher to live out and impart Biblical norms regarding the economy. In our materialistic society, most people are convinced that every person is responsible for his or her own well-being. People work hard for their income and can thus

do what they wish with their money. There is not much room, in their thinking, for a God who provides for those who work in thankfulness to Him. And yet, the Scriptures are very clear about this matter. (Matthew 6:19-34)

Indeed it is the Lord who provides and who is the Keeper of all things. A teacher who understands this principle regards his or her profession as a calling. You work in obedience to the Lord, not for the salary. But then, the Lord in his grace cares for you by granting you an income. In thankfulness for that, you perform your tasks with dedication and enthusiasm. Teachers who understand this do not, for example, take part in strikes!

Stewardship

The fundamental principle that applies in the presentation of subjects relating to the economy is that the earth and everything that lives on it belongs to the Lord. Learners must learn that their money and possessions are not their own, but belong to the Lord. God "lends" it all to us so that we can use it in his service. It is thus that we are stewards of God's world. (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

To be a steward is a great responsibility. In the parable of the talents Christ teaches that each of us will one day have to account for what we have done with his property. (Matthew 25:14-30) A Christian teacher will thus go to great trouble to explain to his or her learners how God wants them to work with his property.

As opposed to unbelievers who are focused only on their own needs and pleasure, a Christian teacher must teach his or her learners to apply what the Lord has given them, to his honour and in service of their fellow people.

To demonstrate this in practice, primary school children can for example be expected to donate a portion of the profit they have made on entrepreneur day to a worthy cause such as a feeding scheme for impoverished learners. Learners will thereby learn that a responsible steward must take other people's interests into account when he or she spends his or her money.

A Business Studies teacher in high school can discuss business practices with his or her learners that exploit the need or inexperience of other people. Owners of a micro-loan company (often called "loan sharks") who levy an unreasonable interest rate are definitely not using what they have received in the service of their fellow people, but only to enrich themselves. Learners must learn to regard such conduct as unethical.

The apostle Paul wrote to his pupil Timothy that greed, the love of money, is the root of all evil. (1 Timoth 6:10) Greed becomes apparent when someone no longer perceives him- or herself as a steward, but as an owner.

A greedy person is never content with the possessions he or she owns. The more they have, the more they want. As Paul warned the young Timothy, so you too must warn your learners against greed. Teach them that it is not riches, but only obedience to the Lord that brings true happiness.

Learners who follow a line of study solely because it is likely to lead to a high income occupation are acting in error. A doctor, engineer or accountant can find true joy in his or her work only if he or she does it for the reason the Lord called him or her to it. Then you are no longer a doctor or accountant for the high income, but because you wish to glorify God and serve your fellow people through your work.

Aspects that need to be addressed

Christ in no way condemns sound economic activities. There is nothing wrong with buying and selling in order to make a profit. Indeed the wise Solomon sung the praises of an honest woman who made a good profit. It is, however, wrong when money and possessions become the driving force behind your work.

The Bible states clearly: You cannot serve both God and Mammon (the god of money). (Matthew 6:24) Christian teachers who present subjects such as Accounting or Business Studies will thus point out the difference between selfishness and responsible stewardship to their learners. This includes the following:

- In Accounting, learners must learn that all accounts must be honestly assessed and dealt with. The books may not be furtively adjusted to make the figures look better or to balance the accounts. A Christian accountant will also never accept a bribe in order to benefit a person or organisation by distorting or withholding information.
- The teacher who presents Business Studies must point out to his or her learners the difference between a reasonable and an exorbitant profit. A Christian businessman will not exploit his fellow person by levying an inordinately high fee for his services or products, even if his clients are prepared to pay it.
- A Business Studies teacher teaches his or her learners that everyone must pay the required taxes, because God requires it. Even if the state wastes taxpayers' money on things with which they do not agree, taxpayers may not withhold their taxes from the state in a dishonest manner.
- Learners must learn that money and possessions are gifts from the Lord that may be enjoyed. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the fruits of your labour. Learners may spend money on things that are attractive to them or buy things that they need. But it is wrong to waste money by living a spendthrift life. In such a case a person is no longer honouring God with what he or she has received from Him.
- Responsible stewardship calls for self-discipline. Learners must be guided to save some of their income for later in a disciplined manner. The Bible praises those who make provision for difficult times that may lie ahead. But learners must also know that ultimately they are to rely on God alone; not on their own savings or investments.

- Learners must also be advised that those who receive a lot from the Lord must also be open-handed towards the poor. In spending their pocket money, every Christian learner ought to remember the Lord's command to care for the poor.
- The Lord does not grant the same financial resources to all. Some persons receive a lot and are wealthy, while others receive but little and are poor. Learners must know that both wealth and poverty hold dangers. The rich can easily forget to rely on the Lord, while the poor can begin to harbour doubts about God's care.

Teachers must teach their learners from a young age to be content with what they have received and still receive from the Lord. Discuss with your learners what it means to be thankful in times of prosperity and patient in times of adversity. Contentment may however never be an excuse for laziness. The Bible states clearly that those who do not work shall not eat. A Christian learner must realise that it is a blessing to be able to work in God's service.

Management

The management of an undertaking along Biblical principles is a further aspect that teachers in Economic Sciences need to discuss with their learners. The business of a Christian businessman or woman revolves around a lot more than just profit.

By means of their undertaking they carry out their cultural mandate in service of the community and to the honour of God. They do so, for example, by creating employment opportunities and thereby allowing their employees to use their gifts and talents.

The learners must realise that owners, managers and employees are all equal before God. How employers and employees deal with each other must testify to mutual appreciation and respect for each other.

The employer who regards his employees in this manner knows that "the worker is worth his wage". He does not exploit his employees by paying them an unreasonably low wage or expecting them to work unnecessarily long hours; instead, he grants them a reasonable remuneration and the opportunity to fill their place in their family, church and society. And in return, the employee should act honestly and loyally within and outside of the undertaking.

Workers who perceive their job as a calling will not act in such a way that the undertaking they are part of, or the company for which they work, sustains any damage or loss. They work with dedication and enthusiasm, as if they are working not for the employer but for the Lord. In this, you as the teacher need to set a good example to your learners. Do you always complain about your heavy workload and the poor remuneration that you receive? Rather demonstrate to your learners what it means to do your work with dedication and joy in service of the Lord.

For consideration

Separate into two equally sized groups, and debate the following two points:

- There is little that a Christian teacher can do to counter learners' materialistic tendencies.
- Do you work in order to live, or live in order to work?

Chapter 4.6

History

Objectives

History deals with God's involvement with the world He created through the centuries, as well as humankind's reaction to it. God created the earth and still controls it. The incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in the history of the world. Following Christ's ascension, all events point irrevocably to his Second Coming. A History teacher must be aware that God reveals Himself through history, and he or she must know how to convey this to the learners.

Various views of history

To know a person, people or country properly, you need to know and understand his (or her, their or its) history. For example, a country's latest conflict exerts a major influence on the thinking, emotions and conduct of its citizens. History helps us to better understand the present and to identify tendencies influencing the here-and-now.

But what determines the course of history? Is history just a matter of cause and effect, a coincidental cycle of events, or is there a higher hand that determines what happens? Was the genocide of millions of Jews during the Second World War the consequence of Hitler's hatred of Jews? Were the Jews coincidentally in the wrong place at the wrong time? Why did God allow a situation that led to the death of so many Jews in the gas chambers? And what about all the genocides in Africa and elsewhere in the past decades?

A person in search of meaningful answers to these sorts of questions needs to take the trouble to acquaint him- or herself with the Bible of what God reveals therein about history. David provided the foundation for the study of history when he wrote that the earth and all who live in it are the Lord's. (Psalm 24) History focuses on God's property, what happened to it in the past and is still happening today.

Learners must grasp the fact that nothing happens outside of God's will. He works in inscrutable ways, far above our level of understanding.

God does not stand aloof from the world (his property) as many philosophers allege, just letting things happen and not being involved in any way. No, He reigns actively over it. The story of Joseph is a good example. His brothers imagined that they could deal with Joseph as they wished, but Joseph subsequently showed them that it was God who had managed the events in his life. God causes kings and potentates to manifest his will.

After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, God gave Him all power in heaven and on earth. Today He reigns over all things as God's anointed king. This is not merely a credo or a collection of beautiful words, but a reality. God's dispensation does not however exclude the responsibility of human beings. God appoints people as his stewards to inhabit, work and preserve his property.

As a History teacher, you need to speak regularly with your learners about Christ's kingship. It must be pointed out to the learners that Jesus Christ is and remains king. Nothing happens outside of his will. Explain to the learners that the Lord's ways are far above our level of understanding.

It is thus, for example, that we do not understand why God allows thousands of innocent children to die in conflicts every year or why godless dictators are allowed to persecute the church.

The apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians that "now we see in a mirror dimly" – that at present we can only view enigmas imperfectly – but that one day we will be blessed with full understanding. (1 Corinthians 13:12-13)

Although as a teacher you will not be able to answer all of your learners' questions, the Bible gives the assurance that God enables all things to work for the good of those whom He has chosen. A learner who understands this principle will not doubt God's benevolence.

Seeing God's hand in history

The word "history" gives a good indication of what the subject History deals with. It deals with God's road with humankind – "His story" throughout the centuries. Teachers who wish to exclude God and his church from world history don't realise that this is impossible. Whether you like it or not, God reigns over all things.

When King Cyrus of Persia sent groups of Jews from Babel back to Judah in the sixth century before Christ, he didn't realise that God was using him as an instrument to manifest his will. The prophet Ezra however made it clear that it was God who inspired his spirit to do so. (Esther 1) It is God who appoints rulers, grants children to parents, and places teachers at the schools where they need to live out their calling.

If the Lord calls upon parents and teachers to tell the next generation of his illustrious deeds, this does not exclude world history. (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:20, 11:19) Learners must learn to perceive God's wonders and his power, also in world history. As a teacher you need to discuss the following aspects with your learners on a regular basis:

- The Lord maintains his church in the midst of a godless world. Throughout history we can see how Satan has sought and continues to seek to destroy God's church, but God protects his church. There will always be believers who continue to serve God. (Matthew 16:18, Romans 9:29)
- God's providence extends down through the centuries. He is good to and patient with all people. He lets the sun rise and lets rain fall upon both good and bad people. (Matthew 5:45)
- What are the historic roots of every learner in your class? And how did the Lord work in the lives of his or her ancestors? Learners must be able to see the history of the world, their home country and their own families as having been affected by the hand of the Lord. Even though we live in the 21st century, people still have a need to see God's wonders in the world in which they live. (Psalm 96)
- The ongoing struggle in history between God's kingdom and the kingdom of Satan continues to this day. Satan and his angels have already been defeated by Jesus Christ, but Satan is like a roaring lion, doing everything in his capacity to drive faithful Christians away from the Lord. (1Peter 5:8)
- The deeds of persons who worked in obedience to God and the beneficial consequences of their conduct are frequently discernible. The same, however, could apply to those who were disobedient to the Lord and who have suffered destructive consequences.

The assessment of history

The meaning that different people attach to a historical event can be diverse in nature. What one person regards as a heroic deed is regarded by the next person as sabotage. Is the person who plants a bomb a freedom fighter or a terrorist? This dilemma is also relevant in assessing the history of many African countries.

History is usually presented from the viewpoint of the victor, but is this correct? Should history selectively highlight only certain aspects that promote a particular view and omit others that might be deemed disadvantageous or to make a particular group of people look bad?

Definitely not. A Christian teacher seeks to evaluate history in an honest manner. Christian history teachers may therefore not consciously veil certain events while over-idealizing others. This requires a thorough knowledge of the subject area.

As in other subject areas, the Bible is the only norm via which a teacher must assess historic events. Seen from a Biblical point of view, this concerns more than the outcome of a battle or the economic and social consequences of a conflict. Ultimately it involves the place and task of the church as the body of Christ in the world. And does the conduct of

believers past and present indicate that they love(d) and serve(d) God and their fellow people?

A teacher must judge all events he or she discusses with the learners from this perspective. A president can develop his country into a model state, but if the methods he uses are unethical, his conduct cannot be justified. A person's conduct can include both good as well as bad elements.

The conduct of icons like Kwame Nkrumah and Nelson Mandela was definitely not only good or only bad. It is inherent in every person to make mistakes. This applies also to the conduct of a state or a political system. Be honest in your assessment of this. Point out the wrong, but also the right about every political dispensation to your learners.

Other aspects of importance

A Christian teacher will refrain from elevating the conduct of a person – however highly regarded he or she might be – as the norm. Remember, the Bible remains the only norm, and thus the conduct even of persons like John Calvin and Mother Theresa can never be elevated to the norm.

Be careful not to portray certain persons or groups which you dislike as evil while glorifying others of which you approve. From a Christian vantage point, relating to history in such a manner is imprudent.

It is even more erroneous to decide on behalf of God what his will was in relation to the outcome of a historical event. You cannot tell the children in your class that God brought communism to a fall because it was godless, or that those who fought for freedom or democracy in one or another country won because they trusted completely in the Lord.

Remember that God's ways are far above our level of understanding. (Job 39,40) We cannot hijack the Lord to fit in with our view of events. A Christian teacher will tread lightly with history because he or she is aware of his or her insignificance in the grand scheme of things.

Teach the children to view history as a unity. Everything that happens is linked to the Lord and his church and thereby to other events. Not only great events are important, like the USA's invasion of Iraq, but also small events like the establishment of a hospital in Baghdad.

All events, great and small, are leading to the realisation of God's kingdom, which will culminate in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This will conclude world history, and those whom He has chosen will live in eternal peace together with Him on the new earth. (2 Timothy 4: 1, Revelation 21:1-8)

For consideration

Write a paragraph of about 120 words in which you describe a historical event and assess it from a Biblical normative point of view.

Chapter 4.7

Geography

Objectives

Geography is the study of the living environment in which God placed humanity. When God created the world, He linked Himself directly to the earth. He created a garden in which human beings had to live and work. After the Fall humanity was expelled from Eden. Since then, the earth has been burdened with conflicts and mortality.

In Geography learners must be guided to perceive the grandeur, beauty and order in God's creation, even as they must also be taught to identify the effects of sin on nature and how these affect humanity.

God granted humanity an environment in which to live

High school learners, particularly, often look very critically at their environment. For example, they dislike the area in which they live, or the climate is too hot or too cold, too dry or too wet. Other learners might have an interest in economic activities, and wish they could live in another town or even another country.

This creates an ideal opportunity for a Christian Geography teacher to discuss with the learners the earth as a living place for humanity. Learners must hear that God placed people on the earth to live and work in it. This fundamental principle from Scripture provides the basis for the presentation of Geography as a school subject.

Throughout the Bible it is clear that the Lord made the world to be a place for his children. For example, God promised the patriarch Abraham not only a great posterity, but also a country in which to live.(Genesis 17:1-8) In Christ, God's faithful children are now able to inhabit the entire earth.

It is the Lord who granted all the peoples of the world a place to live. (Acts 17:26) A learner who realises that space and a place to live are gifts from the Lord will look differently at his own existence on earth.

No one may deprive another person of his or her living space simply on the basis of having the power to do so. By the same token, naturalistic perceptions which idealise unspoilt nature (without humanity) must be rejected. Learners must understand from a young age that God granted every person (and group) a place, and also a task, on earth.

Geography focuses on the connection between humanity and the earth on which God allows us to live. This implies many things for a Christian teacher. For example, the grandeur and omnipotence of God must be pointed out to the learners as these are apparent in such natural features as mountains, rivers and oceans. Learners must realise their own insignificance before the almighty God. (Romans 9: 20,21, James 2:20)

Christ himself pointed out to his disciples that they should see his hand also in everything (Matthew 28:18) Thus also in every earthquake, pestilence and famine that occurs. Christian teacher must do likewise in accordance with Christ's teaching. Learners must know that cyclones, tornadoes and floods are all natural occurrences in the hand of the Lord. He allows rain to fall on those whom He wishes and as He wishes, on believers as well as unbelievers.

The wonder of God's creation

In Geography as a subject, the order and structure God laid down in his creation clearly come to the fore. The water cycle is but one example by way of which a Geography teacher can point out to his learners how marvellously God equipped the earth. It is God who provides food for man and beast.

Learners must realise that this and other complex structures on earth are not simply the consequence of a coincidental occurrence of events. We rather find the hand of omnipotent God behind these – the God who created everything so skilfully. Human theories come and go, but every Geography learner must come to the insight that God alone is able to create.

Apart from what God made known through his Word, we know very little about how everything originated and developed. What we do know is that God still actively supports everything, day by day. The Psalmist was rightly able to record the fact that it is God who lets the sun rise in the morning and set in the evening.

In studying God's works in Geography, we also get to know more of his special characteristics. The vastness of the heavens with their thousands upon thousands of stars is but a small portrayal of God's divine majesty. By the same token, we also see something of his beauty in a lovely cloud formation, or his eternal power in the mighty currents of the ocean. Learners must also see the Lord's caring hand in the study of the earth.

It is He who provides food to humanity by, for example, allowing wheat and vines to grow. Although you won't mention these aspects to your learners in every Geography lesson, it is

wise to occasionally stand still and point out the grandeur of God in your subject area. Your learners will thus not only learn more about Geography as a subject, but also, in the first place, more about God, who is Lord of all human thought and understanding.

Famous natural scientists like Kepler and Galileo had a good understanding of this truth. The following prayer of Kepler, the German astronomer, has been preserved:

“I thank You, my Creator, that You have given me joys in Your creation and ecstasy over the work of your hands. I have known the glory of your works as far as my finite spirit was able to comprehend your infinity. If I have said anything wholly unworthy of You, or have aspired after my own glory, graciously forgive me.”

Galileo said that the works of God's finger (what He did) and mouth – what He reveals in his Word – cannot contradict each other. We are thus able to practice impartial science. This same attitude must also be present in us as Christian teachers.

Humanity's cultural command

The special task that God entrusted to humanity on earth is a great and glorious gift. Humankind, as the crown of God's creation, must as God's representatives not only rule over his creation, but also work and conserve it. All the things that God created must be utilised in such a way that God's name is thereby glorified.

In the Social Sciences primary school learners must be taught that the gold of the earth may be used in order to manufacture objects to the honour of God. By the same token, the farmer must grow his crops to provide food to man and beast, to the honour of God. When God created, He created a garden, but when He comes again there will be cities. Christian children must learn from this to act as workers in the service of God.

The command to humanity to rule over creation is known as the cultural command or mandate. Learners must be taught in Geography what it means to carry out this command in practice. How must a world look in which the Lord is acknowledged as King?

High school learners must, for example, be guided to the realisation that socio-economic aspects cannot be the only determining factor in the establishment of a settlement. Is it Biblically justified that one group of people should live in luxury while their neighbours a few hundred metres away from them do not even have clean drinking water or sanitation? May the use of resources take place without limitation when its main or even sole contribution is to the economy?

Learners will be able to give effect to their cultural command only if they are taught to consider these and other similar themes (which come to the fore in Geography) according to Scriptural norms.

It is clear from the cultural command that work needs to take place on earth. God provides the means to humanity with which to glorify Him, but humanity must develop these

resources. God could have created great cities with beautiful streets and houses, but He did not do so. He preferred his children to do it.

This lends greater importance to Geography as a subject. Learners must be taught how to develop God's creation to his honour. They must know that God provided water, oil, timber, platinum and many other resources in his creation, to be used by humanity.

The high school boy who dreams of becoming a mining engineer must already, at this early stage, know that he may make use of the land, water and other resources to work with minerals. He may sink shafts, erect structures and provide housing for the workers. But he must also know that he may not pollute the air, land and water, because this would reflect adversely on God's honour.

The consequences of sin

The effects of the Fall of Man into sin can be illustrated clearly in the study of Geography. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Rome that the entire creation is sighing with the pains of childbirth (Romans 8:20).

Soil erosion, the hole in the ozone layer, and polluted air and rivers are but a few examples that come to our attention every day. Learners must realise that the Fall adversely influences not only humanity but also the environment.

Farmers wage a never-ending struggle against weeds and pests, and even the structures that people erect require ongoing maintenance. Point out to the learners in your class that everything on earth is subject to decay due to the Fall. Nature – just like the children of God – thus also looks forward to Christ's second coming.

Instead of acting as responsible stewards, many people prioritise their own interests. In the study of geography, we find a number of departures from God's will, particularly the following three:

- Pantheists deify God's creational works instead of glorifying God Himself. Adherents of this approach are usually against any new developments because they can influence nature, which they deify.
- Humanists place the interests of people ahead of all else, including nature and the honour of God. This often leads to the exploitation of nature for human advantage.
- Deism propagates the conviction that while God created all things, thereafter He withdrew himself from creation. Ever since then, deists believe, events have been determined by natural laws, and humanity determines its own lot in the world.

High school learners in particular must be aware of these views, which might also be encountered in school textbooks. A Christian teacher will take the trouble to guide the learners to reject these erroneous views on the basis of Biblical norms.

For consideration

Develop a slogan for yourself that will motivate you to present Geography from a Biblically normative point of view. Place it somewhere in your classroom where it will be easily visible to you.

Chapter 4.8

Art, Drama and Music

Objectives

God gave humanity the command not only to inhabit his creation but also to work and conserve it. Through cultural development, humanity must move from "garden" to "city". Humanity received the capacity to carry out this command in a creative way so that the beauty in God's creation becomes visible. Art, Drama and Music are pre-eminently the subject areas that lend themselves to perceiving and appreciating the beauty in God's creation. Art, Drama and Music teachers must help their learners to distinguish between good and bad in order to appreciate the beauty in their subject area.

The pursuit of art is inherent in humanity

Works of art have been and continue to be characteristic of all eras and cultures. Whether it be music, drama, sculpture or painting, humanity has always been inclined towards creativity. But differently from God, who created and equipped the universe artfully out of nothing, the creative capacity of humanity is limited to what God provides. From the voice of the vocalist to the potter's clay, everything is derived from the means God granted us for the creation of art.

This applies also to the learners of today. A Christian teacher needs to point out both the potential to create and also its limitedness in comparison to the omnipotence of God. It is God who through his Word created the earth and will re-create it when Christ comes upon the clouds.

Through art, drama and music, people give expression to their feelings, expectations and convictions. For example, centuries ago prominent kings, soldiers and noblemen commissioned paintings or statues of themselves to portray their own pomp and

circumstance. The pharaohs of Egypt even had enormous pyramids erected to give expression to their desire to live forever. Thereby they unwittingly displayed their greed, arrogance and selfishness.

Learners who have received great talents from the Lord must be made aware that they could easily fall into a similar pitfall when their talents bring them prominence and fame. You as the arts teacher must explain to your learners that the honour should rather be given to God for the talents He grants to learners and for the creative opportunities He provided in creation.

The pursuit of art to the glory of God

In many places the Bible refers directly and/or indirectly to art. For example, various portions of the Bible are written in an artistic manner. Art forms such as rhyme, cadence and repetition are frequently encountered. In the book of Psalms, God uses music as an art form to bring his Word poignantly home to his children.

It is thus beneficial for learners to be taught from a young age to appreciate the Bible's songs such as the Psalms in their music period. Music teachers can thereby also help to provide the learners with basic Scripture instruction.

Artworks also played an important role in both the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon to convey a certain message to the people. The seam of the High Priest's cloak was, for example, artistically decorated with purple, maroon and blood-red garnets. Between the garnets were small golden bells that rang whenever the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to appear before God.

It is clear from this that God took pleasure in artworks that glorified Him. A Christian teacher will guide his or her learners not to be afraid of practising art, but to do so in such a manner that it honours the Lord. Learners might then compose a beautiful love song or perform a good drama concerning the intrigues of a family.

Christian teachers must point out to their learners that their artworks should give expression to what is important to them. Do their artworks testify to a desire for freedom, wealth and honour, or to contentment, service and love? This principle applies not only to the artist practising his or her art form, but also to those who enjoy listening to or viewing art.

Art, Drama and Music as fields of study

The fields of Art, Drama and Music exist to glorify God through the creation of art works. In his grace, God gave humans a voice with which to speak. A learner who is aware of art will soon appreciate that words can be expressed in certain tones which fall softer upon the ear than do others.

This also applies to certain colours, musical notes or movements which, if applied in the right combination, form a beautiful whole. It is the task of the arts teacher to impart these patterns, combinations and other artistic elements to his or her learners. The learners

thereby receive the building blocks required to develop and apply their creative capacity to the glory of God.

However, many artists do not use the possibilities that God gave them in the correct manner. Sin and disobedience lead certain artists to rebel against God through their practice of art. A Christian teacher will warn his or her learners not to act sinfully in their desire to give expression to their own thoughts and feelings.

For example, learners who indulge in vulgar lyrics or drawings are in direct rebellion against God's moral order. Thereby they misuse their talents and the potential that God gave them for their own wrongful satisfaction.

Rather challenge your learners to create artworks that focus on what is true, honourable, just, pure, loving and praiseworthy. Learners whose life and artworks are thus focused, receive the promise that the peace of God will always be with them.

Evaluation of art

It is not easy to teach a learner how to judge an artwork correctly. What is attractive to one learner is not necessarily so to another. Not all learners have equal appreciation of classical music or a landscape painting. And yet it is important for an arts teacher to teach learners to objectively, according to Biblical norms, judge the artistic and moral value of a work of art.

Learners must realise that not all artworks that fall well upon the eye or ear are necessarily good works of art. Many artists apply their art form as a medium to demonstrate to the world their disapproval or rejection of God.

An artwork in a Buddhist temple can be a masterpiece from an artistic point of view and yet be worthless if it conveys a godless message. Artworks have value only if they testify to obedience to God and can be enjoyed to his glory.

Learners must also learn to distinguish an artwork from the artist. Heathen artists can also create brilliant works of art, and not all Christian artists produce good works. It can even happen that heathen artists glorify God through their artworks, even though this might not be their intention. For example, music students can have great admiration for a musician's skill and technique on the violin, even though he or she was a scoundrel.

An arts-literate learner can understand and appreciate the value of a good artwork so much better than other persons because he or she knows what specific talent and skills were required to create such a work of art. A good artwork testifies not only to the artist's talent and skill, but also arouses a specific emotion in the person who views or listens to it. It is unique, and it conveys a specific message.

A teacher who portrays such artworks to his or her class teaches learners to appreciate and enjoy the "beautiful in life" as a God-given gift. Learners also gain understanding about what is required to create good artworks that contribute to the honour and glorification of God and to the up-building of other people.

The value of art

There have been Christians in the past who have questioned the value of art, drama and music. They take the view that artworks have little value because they are only a reflection of life, and not life itself. In education too, there are many persons who discourage learners from taking Art, Drama and Music as a subject. They think that subjects such as computer science and economic sciences carry more practical value and should thus rather be taken as a field of study.

Parents and teachers who hold this view deny the "pure and beautiful" that God laid down in his creation. Just as He granted gold, silver and precious stones to humanity to make beautiful objects to his honour, He also gave us art, drama and music so that we might glorify Him.

An Art, Drama or Music learner thus has no need to try and justify his subject choice. Like all other fields of study, this subject choice focuses on a small portion of God's creational works. The challenge for a Christian Arts teacher is how to teach and even consecrate this small portion of God's creation (his subject area) to his honour.

Learners who learn how to practise their art in such a way gain their own standing in life, with Christ as their foundation. They are not swallowed up by the popular trends of the arts world, but instead shine Christ's light into a dark world.

Artists have the ability to change their supporters' thinking for good or bad through their artworks. Young people, particularly, can be easily influenced by music and songs that criticise everybody and everything, especially the Christian faith.

Teachers must point out to learners seeking to follow a career in the arts that being a Christian artist comes with great responsibilities. What message ought they to proclaim through their artworks? Learners need to be made aware that God will hold them to account for every person they may end up leading away from Him through their works of art.

For consideration

Ask a few persons to bring a few works of art to be evaluated in group context. These could include a popular song, a popular TV drama or a magazine article. Evaluate the artwork from an artistic and moral standpoint. What good and bad elements can you identify in the artwork?

Chapter 4.9

Technological sciences

Objectives

The Lord gave humanity the command to inhabit, work and conserve the earth. People must apply their minds and energy to take advantage of the possibilities God provided in nature. In subjects such as Technology and Computer Application Technology (CAT) learners must learn what it means to serve God and their fellow people through the use of technology.

The influence of technology on society

Indisputably, technology plays a key role in society. Imagine for example the problems caused by a power outage. In many areas too most learners cannot imagine life without a cell phone or tablet computer. In many cases humankind has come to rely heavily on technology, and has even become dependent on it.

Every Christian instructor teaching technological subjects must deal with the challenge of providing his or her learners with proper guidance in regards to technology. In order to do so, such Christian teachers need to begin by giving normative consideration to the positive and negative influences of technological developments on society. The same applies to students of technology, who must learn from a young age to relate critically to technology.

The increasing emphasis on technology ever since the 16th century is closely related to the heyday of Protestant Christianity in Europe. The Reformation led believers to consider afresh the cultural command to serve God in his creation. Vocationally-minded believers

took the trouble to develop God's creation to his honour to a greater extent than had ever been done before.

For example, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg (1400-1468) enabled the printing of thousands of Bibles, which had been impossible before. And the invention of the compass facilitated trade and missionary journeys to the far outposts of the earth.

This same attitude must still be cherished today by every believer. How do you, as a teacher, use the technology at your disposal to serve the Lord in the instruction that you give? Do you teach your learners to work with technology in a faith-based way? Teachers who take the trouble to normatively guide their learners will regularly discuss with them how they can apply their technological skills to the honour of God and in service of their fellow people.

Technology as a gift of grace

In his omniscient wisdom the Lord ordained for many technological possibilities to be explored and developed, to the benefit of humankind. No person is able to create something like electricity out of nothing, but humankind was enabled to discover that something like electricity existed and to devise plans to generate it. God also granted the development of further skills so that electrical appliances could be constructed to help people perform their tasks.

A Christian teacher ought to point out to his or her learners that the hand of the Lord lies behind all these human inventions. It was He who created the copper, iron and energy such as electricity with which to manufacture appliances. Thereby He made it possible for us to use ovens, refrigerators and blenders in the consumer studies class. Take care, however, that your discussions don't degenerate into sermons that could actually put learners off rather than build them up.

God not only provides people with the ability to research and apply his creation; He also gives the command (and thereby also the mandate) to do so. In the beginning, God created a garden for humankind to inhabit, but when Jesus Christ comes again He will establish a new city on earth. By means of technology, something of the eternal City of God is now already starting to become manifest.

Not everyone applies technology in such a way that it helps to build God's kingdom. Nuclear technology is a wonderful source of energy if it is correctly used, but a nuclear bomb can devastate the lives of thousands of people in an instant.

While still at school therefore, learners must learn to continually ask themselves whether the technology that they are using is being applied rightly or wrongly. Does the computer

program a learner has written for computer class help to build God's kingdom, or does it rather break his kingdom down?

If technology is applied in the correct way, it greatly enhances humankind's ability to do things. Thereby God gives us the competence to supplement our limitations. However, herein lies a great danger too. As early as the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), we see people who contribute to technological advances considering that they no longer need God.

The same can happen to us and our learners today. For example, computer science can lead learners to believe that computer programming not only makes everything possible, but also determines what must happen. Such learners no longer place their trust in the Lord, but rather in humankind's technological capabilities. Do you warn your learners that it is foolish to place your trust in anything other than in God?

Some important aspects

A simplistic view of technological development is usually insufficient. For example, the teacher who presents Motor Mechanics has the opportunity to teach learners about the benefits of motor vehicles, but he must also point out that road accidents are responsible for the deaths of many thousands of people annually, and that vehicle exhaust gases cause air pollution.

Similar examples exist in every subject area. Medical technology alleviates the suffering of thousands of people, but also contributes to population growth, which leads to other forms of suffering. From a young age already primary school learners must learn to pose ethical questions regarding technological progress and to balance between the positives and negatives of any technological advancements.

When older learners weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of a matter, they realise that not all "progress" necessarily has good consequences. Learners thereby come to realise that they must also consider the interests of their fellow people and the environment in the development of new technology.

Because technological inventions are based on human thoughts and acts, they are fallible. An agricultural science teacher must make his or her learners aware that even the most modern equipment can leave a farmer in the lurch. Technological creativity is, further, limited to humankind's ability to perceive the ways in which it can be applied.

Sin clouds people's understanding to such an extent that their technological inventions can offer only limited solutions. For example, the carpentry teacher can point out to the learners the limits of their equipment, to avoid unnecessary waste of material in the manufacture of furniture.

By taking the opportunity to discuss these and similar aspects with your learners, you make them aware that technology may never become an object in itself. Technology always was and remains a measure God granted to people so that they might serve Him.

Dealing with technology

The way in which you yourself, as a teacher, apply technology is equally important. In particular it is necessary to guard against the following two outcomes:

- Teachers who fail to appreciate technological progress not only harm their learners, but also their cultural mandate to inhabit, work and conserve the earth. Technology teachers in particular thus have a calling to keep abreast of the latest developments in their subject area. Engineering Graphics and Design teachers cannot continue to teach their classes in the same way as might have been pertinent ten years ago. Instead, by presenting their learners with new software, they equip them the better for their careers in the world of work.
- A teacher to whom technology provides the absolute answer to everything, is just as wrong. Learners must be made aware that technology is not the answer to all of life's questions. By the same token, when technology is not properly utilized, it carries the danger of making people lazy because they expect technological aids to perform their tasks for them. It is sometimes necessary for learners to do certain work without technological aids. A girl who has had to mix ingredients by hand in Consumer Studies attaches more value to an electronic blender than another learner who has only ever used the latter.

It is also important to realise that even though they may not realise it themselves, your learners tend to keep a close eye on you. An electronics teacher who leaves a device carelessly unattended or handles it without due care must not be surprised when his or her learners treat another device similarly.

By contrast, the teacher who takes good care of technological devices sets a fine example of how to work with technology. Such teachers not only handle devices with the necessary respect, but also gain the most benefit from them. He or she is aware that this forms part of the Lord's plan for life.

For consideration

Think critically about how you as a teacher deal with technology. Where can you possibly make improvements?

- Do you apply technology with the necessary care?
- Do you sufficiently discuss the correct use of technology with your learners?
- Do you create opportunities for your learners to learn how to regard technology from the vantage point of a Biblical normative life and worldview?

Chapter 4.10

Life Orientation

Objectives

Life Orientation deals with how learners must orientate and manage their lives. Learners must learn to love and serve God and their fellow people with all their heart, soul and mind.

Different approaches to Life Orientation

Teachers have diverse views about humankind and how life ought to be lived. Some teachers perceive human beings as intelligent animals. After all, just like animals people have bodies that perform all sorts of essential functions. They believe that human beings have evolved through the centuries, and just happen to have developed further than other animals. Doesn't everyone have animalistic urges (to survive, to procreate) that ultimately determine how he or she will act?

Some teachers deify humankind. They believe that with the right help and guidance, learners are capable of anything. Everything that happens at school revolves around the learners and their needs. Discipline is taboo and teachers no longer impart fixed values, but serve only as facilitators who help the learners to develop to their full potential. Learners can decide for themselves what is right and wrong and thus don't need norms and values on which to base their lives.

The Word of the Lord requires you to take a view of the learners in your class that is different from both the above perspectives. In Life Orientation the learners must be taught that it is the Lord who granted them certain gifts and talents, but also, that they are not to become arrogant

in regards to these. The Lord bestows whatever gifts He wishes upon each unique person. (1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:1-11)

It is not necessary for learners to all achieve exactly the same thing (indeed this is not possible). Learners ought to regularly hear that the amount of talents they have received is not important. What is altogether more important is what they do with their talents. Discuss how they are to use their talents with each learner individually and also with the class as a whole. Teach them what it means to practically apply their talents and gifts in the service of God and their fellow people.

A Biblical point of departure

Whether we are old or young, we can be truly happy only if our lives have sense and meaning. Money, friends and status don't provide true happiness. Life has sense and meaning only if it is based on Biblical norms and values. It was thus that in the Psalms King David called upon God's children to keep their lives pure according to the Word. (Psalm 119)

The norms and values we find in the Bible are unchangeable. They apply to all times, since they were laid down not by humans but by God himself. The purpose of Life Orientation is to help learners to conduct or orientate their lives in terms of these norms and values.

The Word teaches us in the first place to love God above all else. (Matthew 22:36-40) We must be obedient to Him and do what is right. It is just as important to love the people around us as we love ourselves.

Learners who orientate their lives correctly will, in the first place, look at themselves in the correct manner and realise that they are sinful and thus full of shortcomings, but that God also redeems them from sin and that they can now live as redeemed people whilst striving against their sinful nature.

A learner who realises this will do no harm to other learners. He or she relates to other persons, and also to the environment within which he or she lives, with love.

A Life Orientation teacher may not impart these values to his or her learners merely theoretically. The learners can see in your eyes if you yourself as their teacher believe that God and his Word form the basis of your life, and whether you conduct your own life accordingly. There is no purpose in expecting your learners to base their trust in the Lord when you conduct yourself as if God were non-existent.

The example you set counts for more than your words, your cautioning or your encouragement. Your words will carry weight only if the learners see that you yourself live a faith-based life. Do self-examination regularly to see where you fall short, and pray to the Lord to grant you strength and wisdom so that your conduct will serve as an example to your learners.

Principal aspects of Life Orientation

Human life consists of so many facets that you will never be able to deal with everything in your Life Orientation class. The following are but a few typical examples from non-Christian curriculum and assessment declarations that you need to discuss with your learners:

- ***Personal and social well-being: self development***

Considerable emphasis is placed on the component that deals with the development of learners' emotional life and understanding. Aspects such as effective study methods, dealing with stress and self-assertive conduct are central to the curriculum. Bring the following points to the attention of your learners:

- The Lord calls upon everyone to be of service in his kingdom. Learners must decide how they will apply the gifts and talents they have received from God, in his service.
- It is foolish to rely on your own insight or abilities. A good self-image can be destroyed within a few seconds. Rather place your trust in Christ to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth.
- Love of one's neighbour implies that you put other people's interests ahead of your own. This is manifested in practice in how you relate to the aged, the sick, your friends and other persons in the community.

- ***Personal and social well-being: health and environmental aspects***

This component of Life Orientation relates to how learners ought to conduct themselves in a world full of faults and shortcomings. Aspects such as safety in and around the house, the effect of communicable diseases on our community, and environmental questions are dealt with. Bring the following points to the attention of your learners:

- Good health is a gift from the Lord which everyone must deal with responsibly. Do you use your vital energies to serve God and your fellow people, or do you serve only yourself?
- We are taught in the Lord's Prayer to pray for our daily bread. (Mathew 6:9-13) The nourishment and all other things that we need on a daily basis come from his hand.
- The Lord gave humankind the command not only to inhabit the earth, but also to work and conserve it. (Genesis 1:28) What is the nature of development when it is manifested to the honour of God?

- ***Personal and social well-being: social responsibility in the community***

The responsibilities of learners towards their fellow people and the surrounding world is the subject of this component. Aspects such as peer pressure, abuse and good communication skills are discussed. Bring the following points to the attention of your learners:

- The Bible, and not a country's constitution, must serve as the guide by which you order your personal as well as social life.

- Learners must learn to use everything they have received to the glory of God and the benefit of the people around them.
- In many countries there is a wide variety of faiths. These faiths don't serve the same God in different ways. It is only through Jesus Christ that we can come to the Father. (John 10:9) We may not compel anyone to serve Him, but must proclaim the gospel to all.

- ***Physical education***

This component focuses on the body and how learners can apply it to the honour of God and the benefit of their fellow people. A healthy lifestyle and physical development are the main topics at hand. Bring the following points to the attention of the learners:

- The Lord saves not only believers' souls, but also their bodies. Both the soul and the body are important to Him.
- Your body is a temple in which the Holy Spirit lives.(1 Corinthians 6:15-19) You may thus not desecrate it by living a life of sexual immorality or through the use of addictive substances.
- Excessive emphasis on appearance (through diet or bodybuilding) must be rejected as un-Biblical. Learners must nourish and protect their bodies, but also be content with the body they have received.

For consideration

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw up a list of subjects which you would like to discuss with your learners during Life Orientation periods. • Try to find two relevant Biblical texts to go with each subject as a means to introduce the subject and discuss them in the light of God'S Word |
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Part 5

Foundations

Chapter 5.1

The Bible in a Christian school

Objectives

The Bible not only contains the will of God, but also describes how He must be served in all aspects of life. Because the purpose of Christian schools is to teach the learners to serve the Lord with their entire being, the Bible takes central place as the Word of God in such schools. Christian teachers acquaint themselves with what the Word of God reveals, and then go to the effort of organising their teaching practices in accordance with it.

The Bible as the source to glorify God in schools

A Christian school can only exist and function if the management, teachers and learners serve God in all they do. Although a Christian school is an academic institution, it may never lose its Christian heartbeat.

As stated in the Introduction, this book focuses on how Christian teachers are to glorify God through their teaching practices and broader lives, as well as on how to let God's sovereignty come to the fore in and through the curriculum.

This chapter points specifically to the ways teachers and learners can and must gather together around God's Word. In the Bible itself, there are over direct 150 references to the importance of God's Word, in addition to many others to his will, his commands, advices, ways to please Him, etcetera.

Not only do the learners thereby gain a better understanding of the Lord's will; furthermore, they also gain the opportunity to laud and praise Him for all his great deeds which are so clearly discernible in his Word and in the various educational subject areas.

Teachers must realise that the opening or closing of meetings with Scripture reading and prayer is not merely a formality to indicate that a meeting is beginning or closing. School principals or subject heads who are leading meetings may thus not simply choose a portion of Scripture at random. What is required, rather, is in-depth consideration and careful preparation to portray, from God's Word, the basis of what is to be discussed.

For example, new colleagues must be referred to their dependence on God when they are about to undergo a personnel induction programme. The reason why this principle applies to those who are leading the prayers is that, on behalf of those present, they are asking for God's guidance at the meeting.

It goes without saying that the proceedings of the meeting must then be conducted according to this same frame of mind. After all, there is no point in asking for God's leadership and then setting about conducting the meeting as though his sovereignty does not apply to it.

Learners in a Christian school must also, outside of the Bible education periods, be regularly given the opportunity to hear the Word and to laud and praise God together with other learners. Thereby they learn in a practical way that all spheres of life, including the time they spend at school, must be engaged with in service of the Lord.

School opening sessions on Mondays, or the daily opening and closing in the classroom, present a golden opportunity for the learners to live out their faith in practice by singing together or listening to God's Word.

The example that teachers set in this connection is extremely important. Learners can see from the manner in which their teachers handle these opportunities whether they stand in awe of God's great deeds. By giving the learners the opportunity to thank the Lord for the food they are about to enjoy during break, or to pray for help and support during exams, they learn how to place their trust in Him. The learning and singing of psalms and Scripture-based songs can also be helpfully used in reminding the learners of Biblical principles.

The Bible as the norm for all school activities

Many Christian teachers strive to practise their profession in obedience to the Lord. But what does it mean in practical terms if they wish to perform their mission with the Bible as the only source of authority?

We find the answer to this in the Word itself. The psalms teach us that God's commands provide us with insight, that his Word is like a lamp that lights the correct way, and that it is a light on the believer's road. In an educational setting it means that Christian teachers use the norms stemming from the Bible to guide their learners along the correct paths. This approach includes the following norms, among others:

- To teach the learners the real sense and meaning of their lives. In subjects such as Life Orientation, History or Geography, this revolves not around the learners' own interests, but rather around God's intention with humankind as a whole, and with the learners' lives in particular.
- Learners must learn that their teachers are not the source of all knowledge, but simply guide the learners to arrive at true understanding and insight. The so-called "why" questions of learners help them to think about the deeper meaning of the activities they undertake and the subjects they study in class.
- Teachers may not indoctrinate their learners to make certain choices of faith against their will. The Lord in his wisdom calls every learner to decide for him- or herself whether he or she will be obedient to his call. No teacher may thus, for example, compel a learner to go and study theology or to choose certain subjects.
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- To teach their learners what it means to persevere in their faith despite their own shortcomings and failings. Just as David and Paul were able to recover from their misdeeds and serve the Lord with renewed dedication and diligence, so learners must also learn from their teachers what is meant by true forgiveness and returning to God's will.

Christian education thus extends much further than just a school's formal activities and what the learners learn in the classroom. Everything a Christian teacher undertakes must be based on Biblical norms. Without that basis, the conduct of a teacher is no more than a fruitless chasing after the wind.

Does this mean that teachers must find a Scriptural verse to determine whether their learners need to be penalised with lines or detention if they have committed a contravention?

No, definitely not! What it rather means is that Christian teachers must organise their teaching practices in the light of God's Word in such a way that God's will is thereby realised. Then the Word will determine what the purpose of education is, how learners should be regarded, what learning content must be applied, and how offenders should be disciplined.

Applicability of the Bible in everyday life

The Biblical norms that learners acquire at school have a direct influence on their view of life. Unlike the points of departure of secular education – which normally focus on the learner, the syllabus, the teacher's motives or the learning outcomes to be achieved – Bible-centred education maintains the perfect balance between all these aspects. According to God's Word, the learner, the syllabus, the teacher's attitude and the objectives to be striven for are all equally important.

Never may the one be prioritised at the cost of the others. After all, all of these aspects find their basis in the Lord, through whom all things live, move and exist. All things relate to each other in Him, and without Him nothing has any sense or meaning. All knowledge and wisdom is thus to be found in Him alone. His will, which is recorded in his Word, is the only criterion by which all things are judged.

Teachers must guide their learners in considering the world around them from the vantage point of this Biblical perspective. The Scriptural norms they have learnt become the criteria via which they judge the world in which they live.

For example, the Economics teachers will teach the learners that usury – the charging of excessive interest – is in contravention of God's will. Or in two further examples, in Life Orientation learners will learn that it is wrong to seek personal advantage at the cost of one's fellow people, and in Bible Education they will learn that workers are worth their wage.

These and similar norms which the learners acquire are the measuring stick by which they judge or measure the economic activities happening around them. Such judgement is not a unilateral or emotional judgment of affairs. It rests on the Scriptures' authority and is thus universally valid. Learners who have learnt to carefully assess their social, political, economic and also educational environments have not only grown in personal faith, but are also properly equipped to let God's light shine in a dark world.

The wrong use of the Bible

It sometimes happens that teachers unintentionally undermine the authority of God's Word. For example, a teacher who calls his or her class to order in the morning by starting to read from the Bible is thereby not only using the Bible for the wrong purpose but is also desecrating the authority of the Bible. Learners must, rather, learn to be respectful before a Bible reading takes place because God himself is thereby addressing the listeners.

A similar problem arises if teachers quote Bible verses out of context in order to lend more weight to their personal points of views. The school choir leader who expects all learners to join his choir in the belief that God expects them to develop their singing talent, is thereby misusing the Bible for his or her own personal considerations. Christian teachers may not make themselves guilty of these and similar actions.

Likewise, Biblical events may not be overly-directly applied to learners' lives or circumstances. For example, to expect learners to eat only vegetables and fruit like Daniel and his friends testifies to incorrect usage of the Scriptures. The question rather concerns

what God has revealed of Himself in and through the events recorded in the Bible and how these norms should figure in the learners' lives.

Teachers must also guard against simply making Bible verses part of the subject matter in an attempt to give it a Christian colour. For example, to tell Grade 4 learners the story of Moses and the burning bush while teaching the learners about the dangers of fire is inappropriate, for this Bible story has no connection with the learning content. Such comparisons will most probably do more harm than good, since the learners will very possibly come to regard them as just another moral pep-talk.

However, where Biblical practices have a direct connection to the subject matter being taught, such as, for example, the question of how people should dress or their eating habits, how the Bible deals with such subjects may well be mentioned to the learners. Such comments do no harm and cause no damage to the authority of the Bible.

Aspects for consideration

Divide into groups of about four persons:

1. Draw up a list of about ten norms from the Bible by way of which the learners should organise their lives.
2. How can Christian teachers bring these norms to their learners in a meaningful way?

Chapter 5.2

Life- and worldview in relation to education

Objectives

In the Christian life- and worldview, God's will takes priority in all spheres of life, including education. Christian teachers not only base their own instruction hereupon, but also do their best to inculcate a Biblically-based life- and worldview in their learners.

What determines a teacher's conduct?

Humankind's conduct is often extremely puzzling. What drives one person to deliberately mow down a group of innocent learners and their teachers with a firearm, while another person leaves his or her comfort zone in order to teach disadvantaged learners in difficult circumstances in a poor country? Of course, such questions apply not only to great and important events that make the front pages of newspapers, but also to the everyday acts and practices of teachers.

What motivates a teacher to continue with his or her task day-by-day, even in difficult circumstances? Or to be prepared to lead classes every day, even though his or her learners might not be exactly keen on learning? Or to contribute more than a fair share, even though it might not be noticed or appreciated by his or her learners and their parents?

The answer to these and similar questions lies in how teachers view their own lives and the world in which they live. Every teacher has a life- and worldview, even though he or she might not consciously meditate thereupon each and every day.

A person's worldview comprises how he or she looks at life and the world. Does everything revolve around the self and one's loved ones, or are others outside of these circles also borne in mind? Is a person's or community's worldview – including that of teachers – based on the will of God and how best to serve Him in obedience?

As for all Christians, for Christian teachers too the Word of God is the guiding light of life. It is from this point of reference that Christian teachers view life and the world around them.

Your life- and worldview form the basis that guides your thinking and conduct. It influences your decisions, directs your lifestyle and determines your relationships towards other people. The psalmist explains this point well by way of the image of a tree. The roots of a tree which are anchored deep and firmly in the ground determine the fruits yielded by the tree. (Psalm 1:3)

By the same token, the teacher's life- and worldview determines the nature of his or her instruction. For example, the teaching methods of teachers for whom economic well-being is important is bound to have a strong materialistic undertone. More often than not according to such teachers, learners ought to choose an occupation that will give them a good income.

Life- and worldview in relation to education

The term "life- and worldview" indicates a person's deepest inner convictions. It relates to your entire humanness and the meaning of your existence. For Christian teachers this is likely to include the following:

- Questions about God and what it means for a person to live in a relationship with Him. It includes aspects such as what God expects of educators, or what an educator needs to know about God and his Word in order to give effect to his or her calling.
- Questions relating to the world in which you live. This includes aspects such as the teacher's responsibility towards his or her learners and how teachers can help learners to establish meaningful relationships with those around them.
- Questions about yourself (who you are and what you do). This includes aspects that deal with the question of what you want to achieve through your instruction and what you need to engage yourself with, in and outside of the classroom.

The answers Christian teachers give to these and similar questions will determine the nature of their instruction. A Christian teacher's teaching will always be different as compared to that of non-believing colleagues. Christian teachers don't only perceive the purpose of their work differently than do non-believing teachers; how they act and the things they will avoid in their everyday lives will also be different.

For example, a Christian teacher who presents Christ's authority to his or her learners will discipline learners in a manner markedly different from how his or her non-believing

colleagues will be inclined to do so. The Christian faith teaches that disciplining must be done in a loving and caring manner, to the upbuilding of the learner concerned.

Influence of a secular life- and worldview

The societies Christian teachers live and work in often exert a great deal of influence over their thinking and actions, without them even realising it. This is nothing new. Throughout the Bible we read how the Israelites were all too keen to involve themselves in heathen habits and practices. In most cases, they still wanted to serve the Lord, but in such a way that they did not have to sacrifice their heathen practices.

Jesus Christ mentioned this when He told the crowd that they knew how to read the signs of nature accurately, but did not know how to correctly interpret the signs of the times in which they lived. Thereby they alienated themselves from God's will.

The influence of humanism, pragmatism and the idea of a pleasant life on Christian education is a telling example of this. For example, many teachers are reluctant to express themselves over what is right and wrong because it is possible that learners' so-called self-image or sense of human worth might be affected.

Even in a subject like Bible teaching, teachers may shy away from taking a standpoint on for example Sabbath desecration, particularly if they are aware that the parents of most of their learners are guilty of this. In other cases, schools might be cautious about forbidding certain social practices, since doing so might cause a school to lose its current or future learners.

Many teachers also follow prescribed handbooks slavishly out of fear that they might be typified as narrow or alienated from the world if they were to adopt a different standpoint. Subjects such as evolution are then no longer dealt with as mere theories, but are presented as factual, according to how learners' handbooks discuss them.

It doesn't require a prophet to read the secular signs of the times in Christian education. Christian teachers can do it themselves, provided that they acquaint themselves thoroughly with God's will regarding education and then take the trouble to test their own and their school's conduct in this respect.

In practice however, it is not easy to resist the current life- and worldview of society and ask for reform in education. How does a teacher tell his or her school that collects significant amounts of money from a school lottery that this is against the will of the Lord? Or how do you explain to your colleagues that the Lord rewards people in accordance with their gifts, when they generally follow the worldly norm that recognises only the top achievers? Christian schools that indulge in such conduct are really no different from non-Christian schools.

Forming of learners' life- and worldviews

Christian education always has the purpose of forming the learners' life- and worldviews to the honour of God. It is difficult to succeed in this objective because the things that cross learners' paths every day tend to exert a great amount of influence on their thinking.

The role models the secular media portrays to the learners are but one example of this. Such role models' beauty, achievements and fame are emphasised at the cost of a pure lifestyle.

Teachers who are aware of this onslaught know that it calls for hard work and much prayer, but above all the grace of God, to establish the right way of thinking in their learners. Such teachers strive to present their learners with good examples of how Christians should organise their lives.

Of course, they can do this only if it is clear that they themselves live in the faith. It doesn't help if teachers encourage their learners to be more forgiving towards other persons, when it is clear from their own conduct that they themselves find it difficult to forgive those who have been unjust towards them.

In practice, Christian teachers must teach their learners that God's sovereignty must take priority over everything. In all events at the school, but particularly in every subject area, God's sovereignty must come to the fore. Never may Christian education be reduced to Biblical window-dressing or a moral sermon. Learners who learn to acknowledge the authority of God and his Word come to envision their own lives in correct relation to God's revelation.

They realise, for example, their own insignificance before God when they study his works in subject areas such as Geography, History, Natural Science and Chemistry.

Both the choice of content and the point of view from which Christian teachers present their instruction thus exert a direct influence on the forming of the learners' life- and worldviews. Therefore it is also of utmost importance that all Christian teachers ask themselves the penetrating question of whether their instruction is still focused on God's will, or whether they aren't perhaps – without even realising it – participating in the establishment of a humanistic, pragmatic, socialist or any other secular life- and worldview in their learners.

The meaning of a Christian life- and worldview for teachers

It is not possible to here elaborate on the full scale and meaning of a Christian life- and worldview for education. For this reason, only a few core elements are mentioned below:

- The psalmist makes it clear that everything belongs to the Lord. (Psalm 89:13) The Lord God created all things, and everything is thus his property. Learners must, for example, learn from a young age that even their own bodies don't belong to them, but to the Lord, and that they therefore cannot do with them as they wish. This also applies to all other material things the Lord has and continues to grant to people.
- In his letter to the Romans the apostle Paul makes it clear that God's eternal power and glory come to the fore in his works (Romans 1:20) Christian teachers thus take the trouble to highlight the hand of the Lord in everything. Thereby the learners learn not just to acknowledge God as the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler over all things, but also to honour and serve Him in everything they do.

- God ordained that everything in his creation would always have a certain ranking and sequence. For example, teachers receive the command to educate their learners with discipline and admonition, while the learners, in turn, must subject themselves to their teachers' authority. Learners must learn that God's order provides for harmony, peace and freedom: not worldly freedom and licentiousness, but true freedom.
- God commanded humankind not only to occupy the earth, but also to work and conserve it. (Genesis 1:28) Together with that, He gave humankind the ability to establish culture. Learners must learn to respect their culture to the honour of God. For example, the sounds or words that the learners use to compose a song in Music class may therefore not be dishonouring of God.

It is important for Christian teachers to educate their learners in an environment based on the above and other Biblical principles. Together with fellow-believers, teachers must form their learners' life- and worldviews such that they find sense and meaning for their lives only in God's Word. Only in God's light will they then see the light. These are the spectacles through which they should view all things.

Aspects for consideration

Divide into groups of about four persons and discuss the following questions:

1. One often hears the comment that education should be neutral because it is the responsibility of parents to raise their children dogmatically. How do you regard this view?
2. Besides the aspects mentioned above as core elements of Christian education, what other aspects would you also consider to be important in regards to Christian education?

Chapter 5.3

Science through Christian eyes

Objectives

Science can be seen as the result of a person's consideration and understanding of a certain portion of God's creation. Christian teachers' work of ensuring that the content and methods of their teaching are correct is thus like practicing science through Christian eyes. Being a Christian teacher implies that you are engaging with science from a Christian perspective.

What is science?

The practice of science has been a human activity ever since God commanded Adam to investigate all things and give them a name. Like any other human activity, this takes place because people want to achieve something. Through scientific research people not only seek to understand something of creation, but also to improve their circumstances. To be able to do this, people need knowledge and insight.

The original meaning of the word "science" is to gain knowledge. It is important for teachers to be aware of this, because the attainment of knowledge is central to all education that takes place. After all, the objective of Christian teachers is to equip their learners with the necessary knowledge and insight to place their trust fully in the Lord.

The search for knowledge (scientific thinking) takes place in all spheres of life. It applies not just to the physical and natural sciences, but also to philosophy, economics, politics, theology, languages and – of course – education.

The method of instruction in any specific subject area needs to be studied in depth in order to determine if it cannot perhaps be done in a more effective way. The information obtained from such research enables policymakers in education to critically evaluate the current educational situation and make recommendations for improvement in teaching practice, where appropriate.

God established certain rules in creation enabling both believers and non-believers to investigate reality. The created order, which according to the epistle to the Romans can be clearly seen and understood by all people, exists because God is a God of order. For example, the language rules of a language make it possible for a teacher to study certain language skills and then transmit them to his or her learners.

Without firmly established scientific rules, researching a subject such as Mathematics would be totally impossible. Through scientific research Christian teachers continue learning about God's immeasurably vast wisdom, which it is their task to convey to the next generation.

The teacher as a scientist

Prospective teachers are compelled by law to attain an applicable tertiary qualification before being allowed to join the educational profession. Academic teacher training presupposes that education has a scientific character. Students who study to become teachers must thoroughly consider and investigate their respective subject areas and the related educational science in order to be able to transmit the knowledge and skills concerned to learners with due authority.

For example, a Geography teacher must not only acquire the necessary technical knowledge of mapping, but must also know the most suitable method of conveying this knowledge to his or her learners.

However, Christian teachers may never regard scientific research as an objective in itself. Their research takes place in obedience to God's cultural command to humankind to manage and work his creation. When God created, He placed Adam in a garden, but when He comes again, He will return to a world in which many cities have been built and most of the world's population will be urbanized. Development and progress have already and must continue to take place.

Teachers who grasp this principle teach learners as thoroughly as possible so that later on, their learners will be able to research the possibilities God laid down in his creation in greater depth. Natural and Chemical Science teachers will, for example, instruct their learners appropriately in the chemical and physical sciences so that the future engineers among them will be able to develop facilities and equipment via which God is honoured and their fellow people served.

In practice, this means that Christian teachers may not simply be technicians clinging to outdated syllabi or methods. Instead they will strive to keep abreast of the latest developments in their subject areas by, for example, subscribing to a technical journal or undertaking further studies themselves.

In subject areas such as Computer Science or Technology in particular, outdated content is of little value, but the same principle applies to other subjects as well. Through their scientific insights teachers must not only guide their learners to increase their knowledge of their respective subjects, but also to be in awe of God who is the source of all knowledge.

The honest application of science by a teacher

The Lord teaches us in his Word that we may not bear false testimony. (Exodus 23:1, Proverbs 14:5) This applies also to Christian teachers who undertake scientific study for the purpose of conveying the knowledge to their learners. By complying with the following points, teachers can ensure that they apply their science honestly:

- ***Recognise your points of departure.*** Researchers' findings tend to be diverse and at times even radically at odds. For example, a Christian teacher who tries to establish why learners bully others may come to a different conclusion from that of a colleague who looks at the matter from a critical-historical point of view. The Christian teacher will take learners' sinful nature as the point of departure, while his or her colleague would instead start by considering historical injustices.

Christian teachers doing honest research always make known the points of departure of their studies. (Psalms 36:10, John 1:9) They know that there is no such thing as "neutral" science, because the preconceived notions of a researcher always have an influence on his or her results. Recognising your points of departure is not only honest, but also creates opportunities for discussion with those colleagues who may take a different view.

Teachers can, for example, conduct discussions about the reasons why certain children are more inclined than others to bully their classmates. The teacher thereby serves as a light-bearer in a dark world.

- ***Be what you say you are.*** There are few things that anger people as much as someone who is dishonest. A learner who promises to attend a function and then fails to do so is far worse than one who says right from the start that he or she will not attend. Unfortunately, many Christian teachers are guilty of such conduct. They are Christians in name, but how they perform their tasks and conduct themselves with their learners does not testify to this. Such teachers not only harm their own image, but also bring dishonour upon the Lord.

Christian teachers who confess that Jesus Christ was appointed by God as head of all things, but then present their classes as though He has nothing important to say about the world, do not stand by what they say they are, and are thereby acting dishonestly.

For example, teachers must check whether the handbooks they distribute to their learners are based upon and reflect a Christian life- and worldview. If the means of instruction of Christian teachers do not reflect a Christian character, not only are they inconsistent in their faith, but their dualistic worldview will also confuse the learners.

- ***Acknowledge that you don't know everything.*** The human limitations and sinful nature of teachers, like all people, makes it impossible for them to understand all things. For example, no History teacher can explain to his or her learners what happened before creation. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that we "now see in a mirror dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12) and are thus not able to see entirely clearly. Christian teachers humbly need to acknowledge that they don't know everything. Teachers who realise this are not afraid of getting into conversations with other people or even of learning from them. All new things must, however, be measured against the Word of God to be evaluated properly.

Christian Life Orientation teachers have no need to explain the origin (creation) of humankind to their learners, other than what God caused to be recorded in the Bible. Rather, refer learners to the conclusions Job arrived at following his conversations with God. Job found serenity in the fact that God's ways are far above the understanding of humankind. (Job 42:1-6)

No one knows the ways of the Lord to the extent of being able to understand Him fully. A Life Orientation teacher can and should, for example, acknowledge that he or she does not know why God allows so many people throughout the world to suffer from hunger or die from epidemics.

The Bible and science in the classroom

The way the Bible has been dealt with has been a great problem for Christian teachers down through the centuries. For example, in the Middle Ages some teachers refused to teach the discoveries of Galileo and Copernicus because they were supposedly in conflict with the Bible.

Thereby they did not understand God's Word as they knew it, but also created the impression that the Bible and science contradicted each other. Unfortunately this view is still present today among many Christian teachers. The opposite is however true. God makes Himself known to us through nature and in the Bible. Both proclaim God's message and must thus be taught to the learners.

But what are we to do if it looks as though the Bible and science seem to be contradicting each other? What is a Christian Life Sciences teacher to do if God's creation is denied in the syllabus and evolution is presented as a scientific fact?

The first principle that Christian teachers must bring home to their learners is that God's Word and his works (creation) can never contradict each other. There is after all only one truth. Learners must know that when it seems as if the two contradict each other, only one of

the two can be true. Either the Bible is not being correctly read or scientists are making incorrect findings in their research. However, as Paul tells us, we now see in a mirror dimly. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

The theory of evolution is a telling example that Christian teachers can use to point out to their learners that scientific research often falls short. Researchers' findings about the theory of evolution continually contradict each other.

To give one example: The dating models used to determine the age of objects does not accord with the constant shrinkage of the sun that scientists have measured for many years. If the earth was indeed millions of years old, as determined by the dating models, it would literally have fallen into the sun, which would have destroyed all forms of life. Scientists thus need to go further to find the correct answer.

Point out to the learners that evolution is merely a theory based on human thinking, which is fallible. What today is regarded as firmly established, is contradicted tomorrow by new research. Like the theory of evolution, all theories come and go with the passing of time. Rather indicate to the learners that it is better to take what God has revealed in his Word as the point of departure for any research project.

For consideration

1. Think critically about the way you deal with developments in your subject area. Where can you possibly make improvements?
2. Do you stay abreast of new developments in your subject area and do you regularly ponder what the Bible has to say about it?
3. How can you motivate the learners in your subject area to practise Christian science at their level?
4. Draw up a list of objectives to focus on in order to familiarize yourself further with your subject area. Motivate the reasons why these specific objectives are important to you.

Chapter 5.4

A Christian education

Objectives

Christian education focuses on how believing parents and teachers must educate their children and learners to the honour of God. The command to educate the next generation in the ways of the Lord is no easy task. It calls for careful consideration of how believing parents and teachers need to perform this task.

The need for a Christian education

Every community wishes to pass on its own family, school, church or national values and convictions to the next generation. However, what learners pick up at home and in schools is

dynamic and subject to ongoing change as a society's or community's patterns of thinking transform over time.

For example, aspects such as the formation of strong family bonds no longer receive as much attention as they did in the past. The extent of a community's secularisation (alienation from God) or reformation (return to God) exerts a significant influence over how parents and teachers perceive their educational tasks and put these into practice.

Christian parents and teachers who wish to educate children along Christian lines proceed from the presupposition that they and other believers live within a community based on faith in the Lord. Aspects such as reciprocal love for each other, a common search for truth and the acceptance of God's authority over all spheres of life will determine how they go about educating the young.

The nature and methods of Christian education are concerned with much more than merely the transfer of knowledge or the coaching of learners to do well on tests or exams. Christian education involves the total forming and character building of learners to live in obedience to God. Then the boys will be like plants that are well nurtured in their youth, and the girls like cornerstones sculpted into the building style of a palace.

If learners had no sin, there would have been no need for education. By nature, however, learners are inclined to do precisely what is wrong. Active guidance is thus essential to take them to a higher level. After all, learners don't simply come to insight and wisdom of their own accord; they need to be guided towards these by believing adults.

The author of Proverbs well realised this; hence his call to adults to inculcate knowledge and insight in children. When this is done, he says, learners will also adopt sensible thinking patterns. (Proverbs 2-5) In a Christian educational milieu, this is always based on a God-centred life- and worldview. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom indeed.

The role of a believing teacher in Christian education

The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is our highest Teacher. As the Teacher, He uses believing teachers to tutor his children in his ways. Chapter 1.1 focused in depth on the responsibilities of teachers in this connection. What is involved overall is that teachers are called upon by God to educate the learners to his honour.

The acts of such teachers are not determined by a formal job description, but by what they appreciate to be their calling. Together with the parents, they take appropriate ownership of the education of their learners. A pre-primary school teacher is thus rightly excited about every educational milestone that her learners achieve, and high school teachers are jointly thankful when their learners successfully complete their high school career.

The special character of the educational relationship (or link) between a Christian teacher and his or her learners warrants further examination. This relationship exists in the light of God's command to be of service to your fellow people. A Christian teacher gives something of him-

or herself in the teaching of the learners and is sincerely concerned about a learner who is not achieving as desired, or is engaging in wrongful activities.

A Christian teacher goes to endless trouble to establish good teacher-learner relationships. He or she wants to know what problems the learners are struggling with, and goes to great effort to address them in a meaningful way. The relationship must be of such a nature that learners have the confidence to approach their teachers even about sensitive matters such as sexual relationships, the use of addictive substances, or the difficulties they experience in regards to their faith.

Conditions for Christian education

Mutual trust between learners and their teachers is an absolute condition for effective teaching to take place. Learners must be able to trust that their teachers are doing everything within their power to lead them to adulthood. Teachers who perform their task purely for the salary or other selfish considerations do not engender much confidence among their learners. Learners realise that the priority of such teachers is their own interests, and not their educational task.

Christian teachers accept their learners unconditionally. They are aware of their own weakness before the Lord, and thus have full understanding of learners' shortcomings and faults. Learners who are accepted irrespective of their background or personal circumstances attach great value to their teachers' confidence, and don't wish to break it. They would much rather willingly avail themselves of the teaching they are receiving from their teachers.

The word "education" implies that learners must be elevated by their teachers to a higher level of knowledge. This can take place only if the learner accepts the authority vested in the teacher. Schools where learners are not subjected to the teachers' authority are characterised by chaos and disorder. Unfortunately, some teachers are complicit in this by creating a culture of dissolution or by allowing learners to relate to them in an overly familiar way.

Teachers who don't maintain a sound work culture in their classes, or who think it is "cool" for the learners to address them on a first-name basis, must not be surprised when those learners later refuse to accept their authority. Where a sound educational relationship is maintained, the teachers are respected as instruments in service of their heavenly Father.

Christian teachers who realise this are not afraid to apply the authority of the Lord. When necessary, learners are cautioned in love, or even punished. Learners generally accept such authority and usually are prepared to subject themselves willingly to it.

Core elements of Christian education

It is important for Christian teachers to take Biblical guidelines as the points of departure for the teaching of their learners. The following aspects are some of the core elements in Christian education:

- It provides learners with a better understanding of the world in which they live. (Psalm 36:10) By inculcating norms such as honesty, straightforwardness and loyalty, Christian teachers equip their learners to be able to sustain themselves in the world.

For example, the learners see in the conduct of their teachers what it means to be hard-working, and gradually they start to associate themselves with this virtue. When the learners enter the adult world later on, they know how to give effect to their occupation in a responsible way.

- It enables the learners to take responsibility for their own conduct. Christian teachers may not be content with their learners remaining inexperienced. The learners must learn to strive for what God has called them to do. They must start from a young age to work independently.

For example, by Grade 4 the learners should be able to correctly sum up their work in order to be able to study independently later. Teachers who coach their learners purely for exams are doing them no favour – indeed, they are disadvantaging them.

- By way of teaching the learners learn how to focus their lives on the future. The past, present and future together form a unity. Although the learners are living in the present, teachers must help them to create a future vision in order to be sure of where they are headed.

The Mathematics or Language teacher must, for example, explain the future significance of their subjects to the learners. Learners must know how, as instruments of God, to make themselves serviceable to Him in all spheres of life.

The relationship between church, school and home

The tripartite educational relationship between Christian parents, teachers and the church is unique. In devout Christian families, the parents cultivate a spirit of love and togetherness. The ground rule that applies in such families is that “As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord.” The children feel safe and protected, and thus have no difficulty in linking in with a school or church.

The parental home, school and church not only have high mutual regard for each other, but also work together and support each other actively to educate the children towards spiritual maturity. Never may they undermine or disparage one another's authority.

Remarks such as "Your parents will not understand" or "Believe me because I have at least studied" have no place in a Christian school. Christian parents and teachers will rather pray with each other for God to grant the necessary wisdom and insight regarding how to educate the learners to his honour.

For Christian education to succeed in its objective, it is essential that what a learner learns at school is in accord with what he or she learns at home and at church.

For example, learners are bound to become confused if they are taught at church that the Lord expects them to rest on Sundays, while their teachers encourage them to study seven days a week.

Regular discussion between Christian parents and teachers is thus essential to ensure that what the children learn at school accords with what they learn at home and at church. A sound parent-teacher relationship is very different from the modern "hotel families and schools" where learners come just to gain certain knowledge and skills, without parents and teachers discussing with each other what is going on in learners' hearts and lives.

Aspects for consideration

Divide into two groups and debate the following points in group context:

1. Christian parents who withdraw their children from public schools are making a mistake in that their children will thereby be alienated from the world.
2. Since the primary responsibility for the teaching of children rests with their parents, the latter have the right to prescribe the knowledge and teaching methods teachers must present and utilize in class.

Chapter 5.5

God as Truth

Objectives

During the Greek and Roman eras, people began to move away from myths and fables and try to establish truth scientifically. The Bible however teaches that the Truth is not a thing, but God Himself. This section focuses on how God revealed Himself as the Truth, and what it means for Christian education.

Truth or lie?

It has become fashion to believe that all things are relative. Every individual thereby needs to create his or her own truth. What is true and certain for one need not necessarily be so for another. According to this way of thinking, learners can decide for themselves what they wish to believe and what not to believe.

Accordingly also, teachers may not impart any firm knowledge to their learners, but must rather guide them to develop their own truths in relation to their own insights. This has led to radical differences between the teaching approaches of different schools, and even between those apparent in different classes.

Another current tendency is that virtually any subject or point of view can be proposed and proved to be correct by so-called research. This sometimes makes it extremely difficult for teachers to distinguish between truth and lie.

For example, some researchers claim that the imposition of discipline harms learners' creativity and self-confidence, and that teachers must therefore refrain from disciplining their learners. Such research does no service to the truth: it is untruthful.

When one considers these and comparable trends in education, the question arises as to what Christian teachers may teach their learners and what not. They must, after all, ensure that everything they teach accords with and testifies to the truth.

The difference between truth and reality

Before determining what truth is, it is important to draw a distinction between truth and reality. Although they are often closely related to each other, there is nevertheless a difference in their meanings. As a result, reality is often incorrectly confused with what is true.

As opposed to truth, reality is what one can observe with one's senses. This includes aspects such as the number of learners in a class, the appearance of the school buildings, or what personnel are employed at a specific school.

Truth, by contrast, is a certainty that can always be relied upon. Even if it is something that cannot be seen, it remains irrevocably in existence. If something is true, you can thus rely on it. It remains the same today and tomorrow.

As a Christian teacher, you receive the command not only to investigate this truth in depth, but also to convey it correctly and fully to the next generation. Christian teachers must at all times teach their learners to rely only on what is true.

God is truth

The Bible teaches that God alone is truth. (John 14:6) He alone has the divine capacity to give effect to all his promises. No person or being can deter Him from what He has promised. For that reason, we can and may trust in Him in all circumstances. The proof of this is to be

found in God's creation of heaven and earth. He alone has the power not only to call all things into existence, but also to sustain them.

From the rising of the sun to the change of the seasons, everything is characteristic of his truth. Herein we see his steadfastness and faithfulness. Right from the first book of the Bible, the Lord teaches his people that they can rely on this truth. He alone offers certainty in life, irrespective of the circumstances.

Because God himself is the truth, He wants to see no deceit among his children, but only the truth. He thus gave his people his Ten Commandments of truth. His laws are true, as He is. You can count on them. They have stood unaltered through all the centuries. Those who live their lives according to them are thereby striving to live in truth.

The Psalmist expresses it well when he writes that God's laws are eternal, and as fair and just as He is (Psalm 119) Christian parents and teachers thus take the trouble to teach their children not to deviate from this course, but rather to align their acts in close accordance with it.

This knowledge has far-reaching implications for every Christian teacher. Everything that takes place at school must testify to the truth. If God commanded in his law that bearers of authority must be honoured, this is true. Why? Because He is the truth.

Teachers who disregard the position of authority that God gave them by conducting themselves in an unworthy manner or allowing the learners to relate to them in an overly friendly way are thus dishonouring the truth. By making themselves guilty of such conduct, they are breaking the sustainability (or truth) that God established in his relationship with humankind. Without this order that God set down, there is no basis or truth for Christian education.

Getting to know the truth

Before Christian teachers can teach their learners about the truth, they must themselves become acquainted with it. This does not occur of itself. You must allow God through his Spirit to change your thinking in order to be able to know what his will is.

Christian teachers who realise this take the trouble to learn God's will through regular Bible study, attendance of church services and pondering of the Word. Only if teachers learn the Biblical truth will they be able to handle their learners correctly, transmit the correct information to them and pursue the correct objectives in their teaching.

The Bible teaches that Satan is the father of the lie. He and his fellow fallen angels do everything in their power to alienate believers from the truth. The school and classroom are not spared; indeed, they are one of the terrains upon which Satan launches his onslaughts most fiercely. As in the time of Daniel and his friends, he goes all-out to draw them away from the truth.

Remarks such as "faith belongs at home or in the church and not at school" play directly into his hand. Christian teachers must also realise that lies cannot and will not tolerate the truth. The further teachers move away from the truth, the more intolerant they become towards those who continue to adhere to it.

In countries such as England and America, teachers are even suspended for teaching the truth against the lie. Christian teachers must realise that they need to take up the shield of truth in their classrooms in order to deflect the missiles of the evil one.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the truth

The working of the Holy Spirit (also called the Spirit of truth) is seldom given its true value in Christian education. The secular structure of professionalism that characterises education systems leaves little or no room for Christian teachers to give effect to the working of the Holy Spirit in their daily task.

Instead of teachers being allowed to teach their learners in prayerful dependence, numerous measures and structures are in place in a bid to ensure effective teaching. The consequence of this is that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is seldom prayed for. Thereby teachers undervalue the working of the Holy Spirit, which not only led the apostles in truth but also needs to lead them as teachers in imparting to their learners the truth of God's faithfulness and steadfastness.

Christian education which has the objective of teaching the truth will always exert a direct influence on the learners' personal faith. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, learners who stand in awe at the truth cannot but also laud and praise God in their prayers. They learn to apply this truth in and to their everyday lives.

Through the working of the Holy Spirit, learners become ever more re-formed in the image of God. (Titus 3:5) As disciples of Jesus Christ, they learn to live in obedience to the truth. Then there will be no scope left for a lie; they accept the truth of God's law that has been set over them, and take joy in serving God and their fellow people.

Learners must conduct themselves in accordance with the truth

The purpose of Christian education is to allow the truth to take up its rightful place in the classroom. However, if teachers give priority to their own opinions, their instruction will not testify to the truth and will thus be of little value.

Christian education is far more and far richer than that. God himself comes into the picture in providing the truth. The norms that He reveals are of divine authority and thus of general application.

Christian teachers will do everything in their power to teach their learners to conduct themselves voluntarily in accordance with the truth. For example, learners must demonstrate in their lives that they know what it means to not be selfishly conceited, but to conduct themselves in obedience to the truth – which they are clearly doing if their everyday lives

testify to this. Teachers can be sincerely grateful for such growth in faith as granted by the Lord.

For consideration

Describe in less than 120 words what truth is and how Christian teachers can guide their learners to serve God in truth.

Chapter 5.6

Bible instruction

Objectives

Without proper Bible instruction, a school can hardly take pride in being a Christian school. The Lord makes it clear in his Word that learners must not only get to know Him through his works, but also in more depth as He makes Himself known to them in his Word.

The obligation of Bible instruction

In various places in his Word the Lord instructs parents and other adults to teach his children about the Word. For example, in the book of Deuteronomy parents receive the instruction to inculcate Biblical truths into their children when they are at home or travelling, are going to bed or getting up the next morning.

This involves the learners' entire lives, including their instruction at school. Christian education is a great responsibility. We find the same thought in Ecclesiastes, where the author commands boys (learners) to be trained in the practice of truth. Regular repetition of God's Word is not optional, but an absolute must.

The author of Proverbs provides the reason for this: So that the child will not deviate from it when he has grown up (Proverbs 22:6) Regular instruction in the Word is thus the instrument in God's hand through which He teaches his children to adhere to what is true and right.

This command finds practical embodiment in the Bible itself. The children of Korah, who were engaged in temple service, praise the Lord in more than one psalm for his miraculous deeds early in their lives. (Psalms 42-49, 84, 85, 87, 88) The children had to learn from a young age how God had protected them down through the generations, and continued to do so. This instruction took place mainly at home, but also in the temple and later in the synagogues.

It was during just such an occasion that Jesus as a twelve-year-old boy remained in the temple to listen to the priests, put questions to them and answer their questions in turn. (Luke 2:41-47) Everyone who heard Him was astonished at his insight and the answers that He gave.

When Jesus Christ later commenced with his ministry, He Himself also took great trouble to instruct the small children. Hence his well-known command that no one may prevent the children from coming unto Him. (Mark 10:13-16) This command still applies today for every Christian teacher. Those who do not instruct the learners in the Word of God will have to give account for it.

Subject objectives for Bible instruction

In the subject of Bible instruction, knowledge is transferred in order to equip the learners for their service to the Lord. Without knowledge of God's will, there can be no suggestion of true religion. This norm was confirmed by the Lord through his prophet Samuel, when he told King Saul that true faith demanded obedience and not just sacrifices. In contrast to what many non-Christians believe, God's approval cannot be purchased through the performance of good deeds and/or the making of sacrifices.

Christian teachers who realise this teach their learners to serve the Lord in obedience, in accordance with what He has revealed of Himself in his Word. Individual or personalised

religion is no true religion. Those who reject Bible knowledge thereby reject God Himself. A terrible judgement awaits those who make themselves guilty of this, according to the prophet Hosea. Because they have rejected the knowledge of God, He will reject them.

Children of the Lord respond to his Word by willingly believing what He has revealed, and organising their lives accordingly. The instruction in faith of learners thus extends far wider than simply the learning of a series of Biblical facts.

For example, to have knowledge of the Israelites' departure from Egypt without seeing the manifestation of it in Jesus Christ, is of no value.

What the Lord wants, after all, is that knowledge must be manifested through trust in Him. This happens when the learners stand in awe at God's creational and redemptory deeds, which are covered during the Bible instruction periods.

Although teachers find it difficult to determine the learners' growth in faith, this must not affect their presentation of the subject. Knowledge purely for the sake of knowledge, or knowledge that does not lead to inner conviction, has no benefit. The wise Solomon correctly pointed out that inner conviction is the basis of all life.

It is of great importance that teachers should realise that they are acting only as instruments in God's hand. The Lord alone grants faith; not the teacher who presents the subject. It is thus not for any teacher to determine who is growing in the faith, and who is not. Christian teachers are, simply, called to continue presenting the Word in obedience to the Lord – during Bible instruction periods but also whenever else the opportunity might present itself.

Biblical lines to point out to the learners

Shortly after Jesus' ascension, the angel of the Lord sent Philip to meet an important courtier who had come from Ethiopia. The courtier was reading the Bible while travelling on a wagon. To the question of whether he understood what he was reading, the courtier answered Philip that he needed someone to explain it to him.

To explain what is recorded in the Bible is the task of every Christian teacher. Christian teachers must point out the following Biblical lines to their learners to enable them to grasp the full revelation of God:

- ***The Christo-centric line:*** Jesus Christ is central to the whole of Scripture. God already proclaims in the third chapter of the Bible, in Genesis, that Christ shall come to crush the devil's head. The entire Old Testament is a preview of his coming. For example, we see it in the blessings received by a patriarch like Abraham (Genesis 17:7) in the many sacrifices in the Old Testament that point to Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12), and even in the layout of the Tabernacle that pointed to Christ's mission. These previews come to fulfilment in the New Testament.
- ***The theocentric line:*** In the presentation of Bible instruction, it must be clear how God holds the history of the world in his hand. It is the Lord who determines the

destiny of kings, nations and peoples. (Psalm 22:27-32) The learners must learn from this to have respect for the Lord and to honour Him. They must also know what it means to organise their lives according to God's will and not their own.

- ***The covenant line:*** We often see in the Bible how God enters into a relationship with his people by way of a covenant. (Genesis 17:7, Acts 3:25, Hebrews 7:22) Even though they frequently break the covenant, He nevertheless maintains it. Through the covenant we learn about God's promises, but also about his demands and the punishment for those who do not obey it. Learners must realise that if, together with other believers, they willingly serve the Lord, He will be a God for them and carry them through their lives.
- ***The salvation-history line:*** Every portion of the Bible is relevant to God's plan of salvation for humankind. Jesus Christ came to the world to redeem sinners from their sin, and he will come back to judge the living and the dead. Biblical events must be taught in this light, and not be misconstrued to apply to our present-day circumstances. For example, when God commanded the Israelites to impose exile upon all the heathen nations once they had entered Canaan (Deuteronomium 20:16-18) it does not follow that we must do the same today.
- ***The antithetical line:*** God set a state of enmity between his children and the devil. (Genesis 3:15, John 12:31, 15:19) This struggle has raged through all the centuries and will continue until Jesus Christ's second coming to impose a final judgement on Satan and his fellow fallen angels. Learners must know that this strife is not between flesh and blood, but against the world ruler of darkness and the evil spirits in the ether around us. Learners must also know that they will be able to survive this war only if they equip themselves with the full weaponry of God.

Of course, there are many other lines in the Bible that teachers can point out to their learners. However, it requires thorough preparation and in-depth study of the Bible to be in a position to do this.

Practical application of Bible stories to learners' lives

The following paragraphs focus on how Bible stories should be told to the learners. Note is taken here of how learners should apply what they have learnt in Bible instruction to their own lives. By answering the following questions about specific parts of the Bible, teachers can help their learners not only to understand the portion better, but also to apply it to their own lives:

- What does God reveal of Himself in the Bible segment at hand? This question helps the learners to get to know more of the nature of God. For example, in the story of Ruth, learners will learn that God never forgets his children. However hopeless things

might look, God still remains in control and carries out his plan of salvation. Learners learn that God is not only omnipotent, but also omniscient and merciful.

- What do we learn about humanity, i.e. ourselves, in the Scripture passage at hand? This question helps learners to gain a better understanding of themselves and their own situation before the Lord. For example, in the story of Ruth learners learn that things don't always go well with believers. However, the story also teaches believers to continue to place their trust in the Lord in the midst of all their problems.
- What commands does God give to his children in the text just read? Believers must actively give effect to their calling in God's kingdom. The Lord makes use of ordinary people in the functioning and fulfilment of his will. For example, learners must realise that Ruth had to go and glean and gather wheat among the sheaves in order for God's promises to be manifested. By the same token, learners must also learn to actively give effect to their calling in obedience to the Lord.
- What promises does God give in the Bible text at hand? Learners must learn not only to recognise these promises, but also to apply them to themselves. For example, we see from the generational register with which the story of Ruth concludes, how God proceeded with his promise of the coming of the Messiah. With the same certainty that God fulfilled this promise, we too can count on the promise of Jesus' second coming.

There are, of course, many other questions that can help learners to gain a better understanding of the portion being dealt with. As with the process of pointing out certain Biblical lines, dedication and hard work are also required of Christian teachers to be able to do this meaningfully. Nonetheless it remains a privilege to be able to work thus in the service of the Lord.

For consideration

1. Think critically about how you usually present Bible instruction. Where can you possibly make improvements?
2. Do you go to enough trouble in your preparation to convey to the learners what God teaches in the Scripture segment under discussion?
3. How can you motivate the learners in your subject area to deepen themselves further in the riches of the Bible?
4. Draw up a list of objectives that you think are important in the presentation of Bible

instruction. Motivate the reasons why you consider these specific objectives to be important.

Chapter 5.7

The telling of Bible stories

Objectives

God reveals in his Word not only who He is and how He must be served, but also how each generation must pass this knowledge on to the next one. Christian teachers must know why the telling of Bible stories is important, and how to go about doing so.

Why tell Bible stories?

We have seen in previous sections that each generation must proclaim the Lord's power and his great deeds to the next generation. The Bible also gives an indication of how this should be done. In more than one psalm, Asaph makes it clear that parents and teachers must tell their children how God led and preserved his people (the church) down through all the centuries. (Psalm 78)

We find the same line in the institution of the Passover and with the entry into the Promised Land. In both cases there are symbols that point to God's redemptory deeds. If children were to ask the meaning of the slaughtered Lamb at the Passover or the mound of stones next to the River Jordan, parents had to tell them how God freed them from Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. The telling of Bible stories thus plays an important role in the teaching of God's children.

The Lord also informs us of the purpose of the hundreds of Bible stories, as related by Asaph in the psalms. Learners must learn through the stories to know God as He proclaims Himself to us. They must learn through the telling that God the Father created all things and still maintains them today.

Christian learners must hear that Jesus Christ redeemed sinners with his blood and now sits at the right-hand of the Father, from where He reigns over all things. The learners must also be told that God gave his Holy Spirit to lead us and remind us of everything that He taught us. Finally, through the Bible's stories they must also learn that Christ will come again on the clouds to judge between the right and the wrong, the living and the dead.

Bible stories are always normative. This means that they teach Biblical norms that believers must apply in their everyday lives. For example, by way of the Bible's stories the learners learn about God's omnipotence, sanctity and righteousness. Thereby the learners come to realise that it is foolish to rely on one's own defective knowledge and insight.

By the same token, children must also learn about God's faithfulness and compassion, and what 'long-suffering' means. They must be able to see in the lives of the people whose stories are recorded in the Bible that God hates sin and punishes those who indulge in it, even as He bestows his love and grace on those who repent from their sinful ways.

By getting to know more about God through the events recorded in the Bible, children grow in their obedience to the Lord and in their trust in Him. Through the simplicity of the Bible stories, the Lord grants sure knowledge of and firm trust (faith) in Him.

What is important in the telling of a Bible story

Teachers must be well aware that Bible stories are the Word of God. They are true events and not merely nice little stories or myths. Christian teachers must thus acquaint themselves thoroughly with the contents and meaning of particular stories before relating it in class. A close study of the Scripture segment at hand will ensure that the right information is conveyed to the learners.

You may not add something by, for example, telling learners that Eve gave Adam an apple to eat in the Garden, or that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the innards of a whale. The Bible tells us nothing of an apple or a whale.

By the same token, important information may not be omitted from the story because it might possibly give offence. If Jesus Christ drove the moneychangers out of the temple with a whip, this may not be modified by saying that He asked them nicely to leave the temple. Revelation warns that no one may add something or take something out of the Bible. Severe punishment will be imposed upon those who make themselves guilty of such conduct.

The way in which a teacher relates a Bible story is equally important. Teachers who are not in awe of God's works will not come across as credible and convincing when they relate a story. The learners can't be bluffed!

Teachers who realise this take the trouble to give serious consideration to the Bible topic they plan to deal with. They themselves become quiet and under the impression of God's greatness and omnipotence before they commence the lesson. Remember, the teacher's body language and facial expressions often convey more than the content of the story itself.

Don't "colour in" the story to try and make it more beautiful. We don't know if it was a nice sunny day when Joseph's brothers threw him into the well, or whether the birds were singing in the trees when Jesus strolled along the beach of the Sea of Galilee. Remember, teachers are and remain only an instrument in God's hand, and may not put themselves at the central point of the story with their own additions.

God is and remains the Teacher who educates his children. Of course, He uses sinful people as instruments for this purpose. Christian teachers can thus not but pray daily for the Lord's blessing before relating a story. Pray for yourself, who is about to relate the story, and also for the learners who will listen to it – that they will understand what God wants to tell them in and through the story. The story must be told in such a way that God is in the foreground and the relater of the story disappears into the background.

How to tell a Bible story

The learners must learn that a Bible story is different from all other stories. Because the stories originate from the Bible, learners must listen to them with respect and reverence. They must first of all sit straight up and give their attention to the teacher before he or she commences telling the story.

Teachers may never use the story to attract the attention of the learners or call the class to order. It breaks down the authority of the Word if the learners are chatting to each other when

the teacher has commenced relating the story. It helps if younger learners are allowed to sit on a mat before the teacher. The teacher is thereby enabled not only to maintain good order, but also to make eye contact with every learner. By contrast, if the class size allows it, older learners can sit in a circle. This can help to create a more dedicated atmosphere in your class.

To emphasise that the story comes from the Scriptures, the teacher can leave the Bible open on his or her lap while relating the story. The core portions of the story can also be directly read from the Bible. For example, in the story about the calling of Moses, what God himself says can be read out: And when Moses approached the burning Bush, the Lord said to him, "Don't come any closer. Take your shoes off because the place where you are standing is holy ground." By dealing in such a way with the Bible, you create reverence among the learners for God and his Word.

The way in which the story is told must also demonstrate that the teacher treats the Bible with respect. If the way in which the teacher deals with the Bible shows that he or she is not humble towards it, the learners cannot be expected to act humbly either. If however the telling takes place in true conviction, the children will see what it means to be in a living relationship with the Lord.

Solomon pointed out correctly that the learner becomes like his or her teacher and not like the contents that are being taught to him or her. Learners who are able to see in their teachers' acts what it means to live the faith will be more inclined to joyfully accept God's revelation of Himself in and through the stories the Bible contains.

Aspects to support the telling of a Bible story

Every Bible story must as far as possible be placed in the context of its time and place. When and where did the story play itself out? A timeline will help the learners to grasp the better when a given event occurred. For example, did Noah live before or after King David, and did David live before or after the coming of Jesus Christ? A good timeline will always indicate the creation, the birth of Christ, today – and the Second Coming (possibly indicated in brackets).

It also helps if the learners do not share their questions and comments until after the telling of a Bible story is finished. It can be very disruptive for other learners if one individual is allowed to make running commentary on a story or to ask questions as the story unfolds. It is important that good order should prevail in the classroom so that the telling of the story can run smoothly.

After the completion of the story, the learners can be questioned to test whether they have understood it. Those Bible stories that lend themselves well to contemporary Christian living can also be applied to learners' ordinary lives.

Older learners, or learners who are good with language, can say a prayer before or after the telling of the story. With younger learners, it is wiser that the teacher stick to this responsibility.

Other aspects of importance in the telling of a Bible story

It is important that the person who is telling the story should take the age of the learners into account. Learners younger than four find it difficult to listen to a story for longer than 10 minutes, while a learner of 12 years old can continue to focus meaningfully for up to 20 minutes. Take note also of the time at your disposal, and ensure that you complete the story within an appropriate timeframe.

It is very important that the learners should realise that the teacher loves every learner unconditionally. After all, you as the teacher represent the image of Christ to them. You may thus not allow wrongful conduct during the telling of the story.

Learners who are guilty of misconduct must be corrected lovingly but firmly. If necessary, for the benefit of the other learners, they can be requested to go and sit to one side of the class where they cannot disturb the other learners.

Pray constantly to the Lord to grant you the wisdom and strength to avoid being an obstacle to the learners by way of your conduct, but rather to lead them to Him through your story telling.

For consideration

Divide into groups of not more than three teachers. Choose a story from the Bible that you would like to relate to the learners in your class. Now tell the story to your colleagues and allow them to give you tips on where you can possibly improve in your delivery.

Chapter 5.8

Other aspects concerning Bible instruction

Objectives

Learners must know that the Bible contains everything believers need to know in order to live in a right relationship with God. This does not mean that there aren't other aspects to which Bible Study teachers can give attention. In regards to such other aspects, however, teachers

must always bear in mind that these must be attended to in service of the Lord and with the aim of further clarifying what God has made known in his Word.

Dedicated singing

Singing plays a key role not only in the presentation of Bible instruction in a Christian school, but also in the worship of the Lord during hall events and the opening or closing of every school day. The command to sing to the honour of the Lord is derived directly from the Bible. The apostle Paul called upon the believers in the Ephesian and Colossian churches to teach and caution each other by means of psalms, hymns of praise and spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16)

This principle applies also in respect of Christian education. It is so important that the Lord even had an entire book with 150 songs, namely the psalms, included in the Bible. Teachers must take the trouble to instruct their learners in these psalms and other Bible-based songs, letting them sing them regularly.

What makes the learning of the psalms so special is the fact that they are the Word of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, persons like Moses, David, Solomon and Asaph wrote songs for God's people which, still today, learners can sing together, each in his or her own mother tongue. This makes the psalms the best loved songs of all time.

The importance of the psalms becomes clear when we see how many references to them appear in the New Testament. More than 40% of all references to the Old Testament (at least 116 in number) come from the psalms.

In Luke's gospel we read how Jesus applied what is recorded in the psalms directly to Himself. (Luke 20:42) After the institution of Holy Communion, Christ and his disciples also sang a hymn of praise before departing for the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30) where Christ was taken prisoner, later to be crucified on Golgotha.

The significance of the psalms becomes even more apparent when we see that two of Christ's last seven words on the cross were a direct quotation from the psalms. (Ps 22:2) The fact that Christ himself attached so much value to the psalms means that teachers are acting wisely if they take the trouble to instruct their learners in the psalms.

The practical values of the singing of psalms and other Bible-based songs for young learners include the following:

- The music and repetition related to the learning of songs inculcates certain truths in the learners, such that they can and must place their trust in the Lord in all circumstances.

- Through the singing of these songs, the Word of the Lord becomes visible in learners' lives. Where God's Word is at work, learners are filled ever more with God's Spirit, and this drives Satan away.
- This teaches the learners to serve, praise and thank the Lord in all circumstances. In times of need, in times of lack and even in times of persecution, there are songs that believers can sing to establish their trust in the Lord.
- The words of the songs can also be used by learners in their prayers. Just think of the value of David's song of penitence for believers who realise their own fallibility before God.

Bible-based songs give sense and meaning to learners' experiences of anxiety, depression and even rejection by coupling these subjective experiences to God's unchanging and steadfast love. Thereby the learners are able to experience the great richness of their faith, not only intellectually but also with a warm heart.

Biblical geography and ecology

It is good that the learners should have a basic knowledge of where events in the Bible took place. Where is Egypt, where the Israelites were oppressed as slaves, and where are the cities that Paul visited during his missionary journeys? If the learners know where cities like Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica and Philippi were situated, they gain a better understanding of Paul's efforts to go and proclaim the gospel, and they also see how Christ's church grew after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Maps indicating the principal cities and regions, as well as mountains and rivers in the Old and New Testaments, can be put to good use during Bible instruction. For younger learners, also, it is advisable to display a world map in the classroom so they can see the countries where the Bible stories played out.

A basic knowledge of the environment in which the events described in the Bible took place can also help the learners to understand these portions of Scripture. What, for example, is the environment of the wilderness in which the Israelites had to wander for more than 40 years after their disobedience to God? If the learners are able to see photos of the area, they will understand why the Lord had to provide manna and quails to feed the people, or why Moses complained about the lack of water.

Knowledge of that environment helps the learners to form an image in their minds of what it likely looked like at the time when the Bible stories played out. They can also imagine, for example, the scene when Jesus taught the crowd from a boat in the Sea of Galilee, or when He came walking to his disciples on the surface of the water.

Biblical habits and practices

Information on Biblical habits and practices can also be of great value. For example, photos of Roman soldiers can help the learners to understand Paul's explanation of the weaponry of God. If the learners look at a picture of a soldier, they will see the important role played by a soldier's belt in holding his clothing firmly against his body during a battle.

The learners will consequently have a better understanding of the important role that the girdle of truth plays in our daily struggle against Satan and his evil forces.

The wrong aids or too many aids can however endanger the focus on the Word itself. In such cases, the learners focus more on what they see or experience than on the message conveyed in the Bible passage being discussed. Bear in mind that aids are of value only in support of a specific text in the Bible. No purpose is served if the learners remember the impressive sword you displayed in class, without knowing its Biblical meaning.

Also, beware of making suggestions regarding aspects about which there is no certainty. A portrayal of Eden can easily create an incorrect image in the learners' minds. The first commandment also makes it clear that God may not, in any way, be graphically portrayed. Pictures of Christ, however well intended, should likewise be avoided.

The value of church history

There is nothing new under the sun. From the time of the emperor Nero, who cruelly persecuted believers by having them fed alive to lions, until today, there are thousands of Christians who lose their lives due to their faith in Christ Jesus.

Learners must also be taught that there will be deviant preachers who try to take God's children away from Him by proclaiming all sorts of alternative teachings. Just like Arius, who already in the fourth century proclaimed that Jesus Christ was not really God, still today there are those who allege that Jesus was just an exceptional person.

Through the subject of church history teachers can make their learners aware of false teachers and how their teachings departed from God's Word. At the same time church history also allows Christian teachers to demonstrate God's protective hand throughout human history. (Matthews 28:20)

Church history tells how, until today, Jesus Christ convenes, protects and sustains a congregation for Himself by means of his Word and Spirit. Christian learners must realise that they form part of this church which has been convened through all times, and by gathering together people from among all nations and languages.

A school is not a church, but Christian teachers must continue to point out through their teaching and lifestyles what it means to be a living member of the church. For example, if the Lord expects the community of his followers to proclaim the gospel to other persons, Christian teachers must help to equip learners for this great task.

Christian Life Orientation teachers who realise this will, for example, discuss with their learners what it means to be a witness for the Lord when an aspect such as a good work ethic is being dealt with.

By focusing the learners' attention on God's church, they teach them to identify and experience Jesus Christ's love (as the bridegroom) for the church (his bride). Learners realise what a great privilege it is to be part of the body of which Jesus Christ himself is the head.

For consideration

Think critically about how you would go about further inculcating the truth of the Bible into your learners. Where can you possibly improve?

- Do you take the trouble to teach songs to your learners that are relevant to the Bible topic at hand?
- Do the aids that you use during the presentation of a Bible lesson support the story under discussion, or do they cause learners to lose attention?
- Do you, by way of your own conduct and actions, inspire your learners to faithfully attend church and participate in its activities?

Chapter 5.9

The task of the government

Objectives

One question that often gets asked is what the task and responsibility of the government precisely is with regard to the teaching of learners. Irrespective of a government's view however, Christian teachers must thoroughly acquaint themselves with the norms the Lord has set in his Word concerning their educational tasks.

Ideology-loaded education

Virtually all parents, teachers and other citizens of any one country accept that the provision of education is a legitimate function of their government. They find it acceptable that the government has the right to appoint a minister of education who is to run a department managing and regulating the country's educational goals.

Schools, colleges and universities are regulated by the government to the extent that they may not issue any accredited certificate, diploma or degree to students without government assessment and approval.

The government not only has the sole mandate to certify the standard of qualifications, but also reserves for itself the right to determine what content may be taught in the various qualifications. It is the minister of education and his or her officials who determine what may be taught to learners in subjects such as Biology, Art, Geography, etcetera.

The Lord warned his people through Samuel at the end of the period of the Judges that kings (the government) would claim their sons and daughters in order to achieve their own objectives. (1 Samuel 8:11) This is precisely what continues to happen in many countries today, where governments misuse the educational system in order to promote their own purposes.

A dictator like Adolf Hitler actively involved the German educational system to inculcate his ideology of white German superiority in the learners, from a young age. The influence of this was so pervasive that thousands of young soldiers were prepared to sacrifice their lives for it during the Second World War.

Although the indoctrination of learners is not usually so severe, most governments nevertheless seek to implant a certain ideology in their country's learners. The choice of content in subjects such as History and Life Orientation usually gives a good indication of what the government wishes to bring home to its learners.

It is important that Christian teachers should be aware of the government's direct influence on the educational system. They should realise what ideology the government wishes to promote and how it is built into the method of teaching as well as in the curriculum.

What is most important to a government? Is it human rights, nationalistic convictions, economic development or the social upliftment of the citizens it serves? And to what extent does this ideology accord with what God requires of his children in his Word?

For example, if a government wishes to promote the protection and upliftment of its citizens in accordance with God's Word, the teachers can happily subscribe to it. But if it wishes to prescribe such ideas as an interfaith society or the equality of religions in the interests of nation building, it must be rejected. In such cases, Christian teachers must demonstrate to their learners what it means to be obedient to the Lord more so than to the government.

How far does a government's responsibility go?

It is clear from the Bible that the government must ensure that its citizens are able to live a quiet and peaceful life so that they can serve the Lord freely and unhindered. (1 Timothy 2:2) Action must be taken against those who disturb the peace, such as by committing murder or stealing the possessions of other people. The government receives the power from the Lord to punish those who are guilty of such contraventions. (Romans 13;1-7)

This does not, however, mean that it may misuse its authority in other fields. For example, it may not prescribe who people may marry, what occupation they may practise or how parents should raise and educate their children. For example, if a government were to legislate that parents may no longer discipline their children, it would be exceeding the mandate it received from God.

This also applies to formal education. Nowhere in the Bible is there an indication that the government is to prescribe to parents how they must educate their children, or have them educated. If the government were to do this, it would be moving into territory over which they have no authority.

This does not mean that a government has no role to play in education. Where parents do not meet their responsibility to raise and educate their children properly, this threatens the orderly conduct of society, and the government must necessarily intervene. A government cannot allow a group of citizens to commit crimes and otherwise disturb the peace.

However, how a government itself acts is just as important. For example, where parents are financially unable to establish or maintain schools, the government can provide assistance to them through, for example, some form of tax relief. Schools could be exempted from paying municipal rates, or municipal services can be provided to struggling educational institutions at a reduced tariff.

Thereby a government would help parents to properly carry out their educational task. In communities where parents make little or no effort to establish schools for their children, a government may, and indeed should, intervene by providing schools for these learners.

In addition, a government must also ensure that all education complies with certain minimum standards. For example, all learners, whether studying at a private or public school, must

learn to read and write and master certain mathematical skills. The lack of such basic life skills could easily lead to chaos and the undermining of society.

A government can meet its responsibility in this respect by requiring all teachers to have an appropriate qualification, and setting certain minimum standards in the curriculum. However, this does not mean that it may determine the content to be taught to the learners. The parents of the kids being taught at any one school should be able to decide together whether or not subjects such as Bible Instruction or dedicated singing should be presented at their children's school.

The task of the teacher

Christian teachers may never make themselves guilty of bringing the authority of a government into disrepute. The learners must be able to see in their conduct what it means to obey the government in everything that is right and reasonable according to God's Word.

Teachers who conduct themselves accordingly not only pray in public for the government; they also ensure that they comply with the department's stated prescriptions. They give departmental officials the opportunity to carry out their monitoring tasks and make the effort to achieve the minimum standards set by the department of education.

Thereby they not only equip their learners to become good citizens of the country, but ultimately also teach their learners to be good citizens in God's kingdom.

Teachers may, however, never allow departmental officials to act over-prescriptively in regards to the nature and character of their teaching. The view that a teacher is purely a technician who simply teaches what is prescribed to him or her by the department of education is incorrect.

The teacher, and not the department, will one day have to give account of what he or she taught his or her learners. The most important question in everything has always been and continues to be: "What does the Lord require?" and not "What does the government require?" Christian teachers who realise this know that they themselves, and not the government, are responsible for the curriculum and must determine what learners need to know to give effect to their calling in obedience to the Lord.

The responsibility of parents

Unfortunately there are many parents who are only too thankful that the government handles the education of their children. They regard themselves as ill-equipped in this sphere, and accept that the government will prioritise the interests of their children. They may also feel that they don't have the time to monitor the education of their children. They consequently give little or no attention to what is being taught to their children. They are unaware of the influence a government's ideology and practices can have on children.

It often happens that parents wonder why their child is acting or thinking in a certain way. In many cases however, the answer is clear. The children have learned in school to accept a

different belief or vision than the one their parents adhere to. For example, in a subject like Life Orientation, learners may be taught that every person has certain rights, and that as such everyone can decide for themselves whether or not to terminate his or her own life.

The influence a government exerts on its learners through the curriculum cannot be underestimated. Christian teachers take the trouble to communicate regularly with their learners' parents. In public schools, parents must think through the implications if the government decides that no Bible Study shall further be presented at school. (Acts 4:19,20)

Parents must, further, be actively encouraged to acquaint themselves with the content their children are taught at school. They must, for example, be aware if the government requires the theory of evolution to be taught to their children as a fact. Only if parents are aware of such things, can they put measures in place to correct the incorrect approach.

Parents must be actively encouraged to take control over the education of their children through the establishment of private schools in which the parents themselves can determine the nature and character of the teaching provided. By appointing Christian teachers and presenting the curriculum correctly, parents ensure that they, and not the government, are forming their children into what they should be.

In cases where this is not possible, Christian parents must at least ensure that they are well represented in school control bodies. Thereby they are able to influence a school's character and ethos at least to an extent.

For consideration

Discuss the following points in group context:

1. How can Christian teachers ensure that they teach the will of the Lord, and not the ideology of the government, to their learners?
2. What can Christian teachers do in practice to point out to parents their responsibility regarding the education of their children?

Chapter 5.10

A short review of the history of Christian education

Objectives

Education is a central theme throughout the Bible. The Triune God requires that his children be educated in knowledge and in truth, and he commanded believing adults to actively participate herein. This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of Biblical education and its present status worldwide.

Education in the Old Testament

Teaching commenced with God and not with humankind. After creation, He educated people through his works and law. For example, by way of Israel's release from Egypt, they learnt something of God's omnipotence through his works.

God also revealed Himself to Moses by speaking directly with him. Not only did He teach Moses who He was, but he also ordered him to educate the people about Him. The first four books in the Bible contain to a great extent the contents that Moses had to teach the ancient Israelites.

The importance of children learning about God's laws from a young age is also clear from this. This was necessary in order for them to obey the laws. The parents had to inculcate these rules in their children from early morning until late at night, both when at home as well as when travelling. That is to say, everywhere and at all times.

After the death of Moses, the Lord tasked the Levites (the priests) with the teaching of his people. Their most important job was to instruct the people in the ways of the law. They had to learn to obey God's will, to respect each other and to comply with their duties in the community. (2 Chronicles 35:3)

So important was this command that the priest (and prophet) Samuel could not even think about the possibility of deviating from it. Other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea were all inspired by the Lord to educate the people in his ways.

We also read in the Bible about schools where the prophets trained their disciples to resist the moral, social and spiritual degeneration of society. What they taught their students a few thousand years ago is just as relevant to our modern society today.

The Lord also blessed certain persons in the Old Testament with exceptional wisdom and insight to enable them to teach others. King Solomon is probably the best-known of these philosophers. The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs all contain guidance intended for the teaching of the people of the day (and for us today, too). Proverbs sums it up

well in the following words: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 1:7)

Education in the New Testament

As in the Old Testament, teaching in the New Testament continued to start with the Lord. The Bible teaches that Jesus' disciples, the multitude and even his enemies acknowledged Him as a very special Teacher. In the Gospels alone, there are at least 45 references to Him as Teacher. His teachings were applicable to all people, from the ordinary man in the street to the most learned of Pharisees.

He spoke with such authority that the multitudes came from all over to listen to Him. On one occasion someone He had healed remarked to the Pharisees that no one had yet spoken as He did. Chapter 1.3 focuses in greater detail on Jesus Christ's exceptional methods of instruction. Teachers can and must still use these methods to proclaim God's wonders to their learners.

One special aspect of Jesus Christ' instruction was the trouble He took to equip his disciples for their teaching tasks. His last command to them was not only to make disciples of all nations, but also to teach those who come to faith everything that He commanded. (Mathew 28:19)

After his Ascension, they were able to carry out this command powerfully, both within and outside of Jerusalem. In this connection the apostle Paul, to whom Jesus Christ appeared on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:15), called upon parents not to neglect their children but rather to educate them with discipline and admonition. As in the Old Testament, they had to teach their children in the ways of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

It is not only God the Father and Jesus Christ who are hailed as Teachers in the Bible, but also the Holy Spirit. Shortly before his Ascension, Christ promised his disciples that his Father would send the Holy Spirit to them, to teach them everything that they needed to know. (Acts 1:8) The Holy Spirit not only reveals knowledge and understanding of all things, but also grants the ability to certain persons to teach.

It is He who guides Christian teachers and equips them to proclaim God's wonders to their learners with power and conviction. This He does by forming the image of God in the minds of both the teacher and learners. Christian teachers can thus not do otherwise than ask God in prayer to strengthen them to be able to live a Spirit-filled life.

The influence of the Reformation

The period before the Reformation (16th century) is known as the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages. During this period the church gradually moved away from the pure teachings, instead placing itself in the centre. It suited the church leaders to keep the members ignorant, because thereby they were able, under the pretext that it was God's will, to manipulate them as they saw fit.

Since the Bible was not freely available, and could be read only in Greek, Hebrew or Latin, the people were dependent on the church leaders' interpretation of the Word.

There was no question whatsoever of teaching and training for ordinary citizens and their children. Only a small group of privileged people from the church and nobility could study. It was in this context that church reformers like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli reformed the church and thereby also the teaching of children in the 16th century.

While the reformers had the primary purpose of purifying the church from its corrupt practices, the question of the teaching of children naturally also came strongly to the fore. Fresh thought was given to how children should be educated to prepare them in the faith and knowledge of God for their calling in society. Important aspects that came to the fore were, among others:

- The purpose of education is to lead children to a unity with Jesus Christ. Education thus should be compulsory for all children (Luther).
- God the Father gave Jesus Christ all power in heaven and on earth. Every subject area taught at school must testify to this eternal sovereignty (Calvin).
- It is not the responsibility of the government or church to educate children, but of the parents (Zwingli).

During and directly after the Reformation, Christian education thrived. Education was not primarily focused on secular objectives, but to prepare the learners for their God-given callings in life. Probably one of the most important events of this period was the translation of the Bible into the language of ordinary people. For the first time learners were able to read the Bible in their mother tongues.

With the encouragement of the reformers, training centres and schools were established all over Western Europe. Much attention was devoted to the knowledge and correct understanding of the Bible. For example, at the request of the Elector (Prince) Frederik III of Prussia, the Heidelberg Catechism was drawn up in 1563 as a handbook for use in schools. This catechism is still today a confession of faith in Reformed churches and is used by them as a guide in church services and catechism.

Christian education today

In the centuries after the Reformation, society steadily became ever more worldly in countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland where the Reformation had been most influential. Many schools and universities that initially had been Christian gradually began to abandon the faith and have by now virtually entirely lost it.

In the Netherlands, the first decades of the 20th century saw a struggle wherein Christian parents insisted on Christian education in parent-run schools, fully subsidized by the state. This is still possible today in that country, although teaching from a Biblical vantage point

has become forbidden in many other European countries' public schools. Nonetheless there are still a few private Christian schools and universities to which believers can send their children. These schools make a great contribution to continuing to let the light of God's Word shine in decadent societies.

In contrast, in Africa and Asia Christian schools are experiencing unprecedented growth. Since the 20th century many Christian schools, colleges and universities have opened their doors on these continents. Most of these schools are in underdeveloped areas where parents are nonetheless prepared, despite their poverty, to make sacrifices in the interests of their child-ren's education.

An organisation such as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) has more than 5 500 member schools in 108 countries worldwide to which they not only provide a curriculum, but also teacher training where possible. The school network makes it possible for 5.5 million learners to receive a Christian education.

There are other organisations internationally which similarly promote Christian education, for example in South Africa and Namibia, which make a significant contribution on a more local level for the expansion of Christian education.

Christian schools worldwide are engaged in an ongoing struggle with the evil one. Satan realizes all too well that if he wins the struggle in the classrooms, he will have dealt a serious blow to the church of Christ.

However, the onslaught on Christian education comes from without and within. From without, it ranges from schools that find it difficult to gain registration from the authorities, to schools which are decried as extremist or unworldly and even banned. From within there are parents, teachers and learners who exert pressure on schools to adopt the secular practices of other schools.

Nonetheless, as the Lord has promised in his Word, He will not abandon the handwork of those who hold firm to his Word. (Hebrews 13:5) This promise applies not only to individuals and churches, but also to school communities. It provides certainty to Christian teachers who sometimes perform their task in dependence on the Lord in the midst of very difficult circumstances.

For consideration

Describe in less than 120 words how Christian education has flourished through the Old and New Testaments into what it is today. What lessons can a Christian teacher learn from the past which he or she can apply practically in his or her classroom?

Appendix

The Bible on education

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Of course the whole Bible is a Book of teaching and instruction. More specifically, there are at least a hundred direct references to the importance of education. What follows, is an alphabetic list of some of the most relevant texts (the English Standard Version is used).

[1 Chronicles 25:8](#) And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike.

[2 Corinthians 10:5](#) We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

[2 John 1:9](#) Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

[1 Timothy 1:11](#) For which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.

[2 Timothy 2:1-2](#) You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[2 Timothy 2:15](#) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

[Acts 7:22](#) And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

[Colossians 1:28](#) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

[Colossians 3:16](#) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.

[Daniel 1:17](#) As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

[Deuteronomy 6:1-2](#) “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.

[Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) 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.

[Deuteronomy 11:19](#) You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

[Ecclesiastes 7:12](#) For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.

[Ecclesiastes 12:9-12](#) Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

[Ephesians 6:1-4](#) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[Ephesians 6:4](#) Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[Ezekiel 44:23](#) They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.

[Ezra 7:10](#) For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

[Hosea 4:6](#) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

[Isaiah 28:9-10](#) "To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little."

[Isaiah 54:13](#) All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.

[James 3:1-2](#) Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

[John 13:13](#) You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

[John 14:26](#) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

[Luke 6:40](#) A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

[Matthew 5:19](#) Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

[Matthew 6:33](#) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

[Matthew 10:24](#) A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

[Matthew 28:19-20](#) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

[Philippians 4:9](#) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me — practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

[Proverbs 1:1-5](#) The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance ...

[Proverbs 1:7](#) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[Proverbs 1:8](#) Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching,

[Proverbs 2:6](#) For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

[Proverbs 3:1-5](#) My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

[Proverbs 4:1-5](#) Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, “Let your

heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

[Proverbs 4:13](#) Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

[Proverbs 6:6](#) Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.

[Proverbs 9:9-10](#) Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

[Proverbs 10:14](#) The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.

[Proverbs 13:20](#) Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

[Proverbs 16:16](#) How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

[Proverbs 16:22](#) Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools is folly.

[Proverbs 18:15](#) An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

[Proverbs 22:6](#) Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

[Proverbs 22:29](#) Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

[Proverbs 23:12](#) Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.

[Proverbs 24:4](#) By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

[Proverbs 28:2](#) When a land transgresses, it has many rulers, but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue.

[Proverbs 29:15](#) The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

[Psalm 25:4-5](#) Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

[Psalm 32:8-9](#) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

[Psalm 34:11](#) Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

[Psalm 78:3-8](#) Things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments ...

[Psalm 119:66](#) Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.

[Romans 12:2](#) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

[Romans 12:6-7](#) Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

[Titus 2:1](#) But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

[Titus 2:3-5](#) Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Authors' profiles

Pieter Bisschoff comes from a teaching family, studied at the then Potchefstroom College of Education and at Unisa (HED, BA Hons), and then taught for 23 years, of which 15 years were as Principal of the Gereformeerde Skool Dirk Postma in Pretoria. In 2005 he founded the Aros (Akademie Reformatoriese Onderwys en Studies; Academy of Reformed Studies and Training), a private Christian college of education in Pretoria, and served as its executive head. Subsequently he managed the teacher training department of Mukhanyo Theological College. At present he serves the Bo Karoo Opleiding as its campus principal.

Rob van der Kooy studied at the University of Pretoria (BA Hons and MA) and has worked as a financial journalist, development economist and publisher. He has been involved in Christian education for over 20 years, initially as chairman of the management body of the Gereformeerde Skool (Reformed School) Dirk Postma (part-time), and thereafter as Dirk Postma's director (full-time). He also co-founded Aros and served as its director. Since his retirement he has been involved part-time at Mukhanyo Theological College.

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How to be a Christian teacher: a practical guide

“Essential reading for primary and secondary teachers”

This is a work full of interesting information and good insights. It is clear that this is compiled by people with lots of experience as teachers. Congratulations.

Dr Steve Hardy, educational consultant inter alia with the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education and Langham. Author of Excellence in Theological Education, Langham.

This book reminds and strengthens the perspective on the essence of Christian education. Teachers around the world would do well to use it as a guide to quality Christian education.

Sean Moore, director Southern Africa of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

This book is exactly what the church in the Majority world needs! We know that this will be invaluable to every Christian teacher in the care of the lambs of the Lord.

Jopie van der Linden, director Reformational Study Centre.

Well done! This is desperately needed as a practical guide to being a Christian teacher.

Dr Peter Hammond, missionary, author and director of Frontline Fellowship and the Reformation Society.

This book comes from the heart of highly experienced Reformed Christian educators, and would be a great help for ongoing professional development and teambuilding discussions – even where local situations may differ from the experience of the authors.

Keith Sikkema, Covenant Reformed Teachers College, Canada

No teacher who desired to mentor their students according to God's will can do without this book, especially in Africa where this book was written. Teacher all over the world will find this a valuable resource. Highly recommended.

Dr Brian DeVries, principal, Mukhanyo Theological College.