

First Things First

We have chosen as a theme for this school year—First Things First. What does this theme mean for parents? teachers? school leaders?

In my last *Christian School Comment*, I wrote about my “little girl” Lindi, who was preparing for student teaching and a December commencement. Just a few weeks ago, Bonnie and I drove with our other “little girl,” our youngest daughter, Aubrey, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to West Palm Beach, Florida ... a 4,000-mile round trip! Aubrey is a sophomore at Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBA). A quick look at the university’s website, www.pba.edu, reveals that this Christian university is committed to enlightening minds, enriching souls, and extending hands.

So why do my wife, Bonnie, and I share a commitment to cradle-to-grave Christian school education for each of our four children? Why drive 4,000 miles with Aubrey so that she can attend a Christian university? Because we are God’s stewards. We believe that everything we have, including our children, belongs to God. Further, we believe we will one day give an account to our Creator, God, for all that He has entrusted to our care. Having these realities in mind, we believe that Christian school education is one of the best means available to achieve our chief goal for our children ... that each one of them will grow to become fully prepared, sold-out, full-throttle disciples of Jesus Christ.

ACSI’s verse for the year is Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (KJV). What does this mean? Simply put, we need to seek God’s rule in our lives and to influence those we love to do the same. “The kingdom of God is the reign of God through Jesus Christ in the lives of persons as evidenced by God’s activity in, through, and around them” (Mims 1997, 18).

Kingdom education, then, is “a life-long, Bible-based, Christ-centered process of leading a child to Christ, building a child up in Christ, and equipping a child to serve Christ!” (Schultz 1998, 25). Christian schools are schools committed to kingdom education. The purpose of teaching is to cause students to learn, and we know that true learning has taken place when students have a change of behavior. Bonnie and I were blessed as we attended PBA’s Opening of University Convocation (August 27, 2010, in the Rubin Arena, Greene Complex). During this ceremony, the faculty and staff read the “Faculty Affirmation of Palm Beach Atlantic University’s Guiding Principles,” which was written in the university’s convocation program:

[PBA] is a comprehensive Christian university with a core emphasis in the liberal arts. Its purpose is to offer a curriculum of studies and a program of student activities dedicated to the development of ... growth in Christian ideals. Founded under the providence of God with the conviction that there is a need for a university in this community that will expand the minds, develop the moral character, and enrich the spiritual lives of all the people who may come within the

orbit of its influence, [PBA] shall stand as a witness for Jesus Christ, expressed directly through its administration, faculty, and students. To assure the perpetuation of these basic concepts of its founders, it is resolved that all those who become associated with [PBA] as trustees, officers, members of the faculty or of the staff, must believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments; that man was directly created by God; that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin; that He is the Son of God, our Lord and Savior; that He died for the sins of all men and thereafter arose from the grave; that by repentance and the acceptance of and belief in Him, by the grace of God, the individual is saved from eternal damnation and receives eternal life in the presence of God; and it is further resolved that the ultimate teachings in this University shall always be consistent with these principles.

Later in the ceremony, the administration, faculty, and staff recited a pledge to the new students:

We recognize that [PBA] exists to enlighten minds, enrich souls, and extend hands. We agree to integrate the Christian faith with learning—inside the classroom and outside the classroom. We agree to be positive role models—spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically. We agree to show care and concern for our students by following Jesus Christ’s model of servant-leadership.

Wow! As I watched these individuals recite this pledge, my heart was encouraged as I prayed a silent prayer to God: *And may it be so!*

As stewards (servant leaders), we all will one day give an account of our actions to our Creator, God ... and what does He require? God requires *faithfulness* of His stewards. Our goal should be to faithfully and “effectively prepare students for life.”* As stewards, we have had these students entrusted to our care by God. Our job, then, is to lead the children we serve to become thoroughly prepared, sold-out, full-throttle disciples of Jesus Christ! For our children and students to become disciples of Christ but not to become thoroughly prepared to live life here and now is an abuse of their minds. On the other hand, for our children and students to be thoroughly prepared but not taught to follow Christ is an abuse of their eternal souls. As parents, teachers, and Christian school leaders, may we always keep *First Things First!*

*Association of Christian Schools International, About ACSI: ACSI vision and mission, <http://www.acsi.org/About/tabid/535/itemid/20/Default.aspx>.

References

- Mims, Gene. 1997. *Thine is the kingdom: The reign of God in today’s world*. Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press.
Schultz, Glen. 1998. *Kingdom education: God’s plan for educating future generations*. 1st ed. Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press.



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