



If you are reading this, congratulations, you are already beginning to consider the role of Christian education in your life. This document is designed to help you understand what Christian education is, what it is not, and how you should go about determining if Christian education is right for you and your children. While this page is designed for parents, older students will find the information just as useful in determining if Christian education is right for them.

The Biblical Basis for Christian Education

The Bible instructs us to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6, NASB) and commands us to bring up our children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB). As parents, how do we comply with this biblical mandate?

Discipline

Discipline, in the sense Paul uses it, does not mean punishment for wrongdoing. The Greek word used in Ephesians 6:4 for discipline is *paideia* (παιδεία) from which we develop our word pedagogy or method of teaching. The English word discipline developed from the Latin *disciplina* having the same meaning. Paul is using the word discipline to mean instruction or education. Therefore, we are to educate our children in the way of the Lord.

Instruction

While instruction might seem the same as discipline, the actual Greek word is *nouthesia* (νουθεσία). In other Bible versions, this word is translated as admonition. In more common English, we might say respect, awe, or fear of the Lord. While not a popular topic in today's churches, the fear of the Lord is a phrase used over 100 times in the Bible with occurrences in Old and New Testaments alike. Most important for our purposes, at least three times (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10 & Psalm 111:10) the Bible refers to the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom, of course, should be the goal of all education.

Hopefully, you can see that it is our duty as Christian parents to train our children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. How, then, is this best accomplished.

Parent-Church-School Partnership

"...A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Ecclesiastes 4:12

While the parent has the primary responsibility for bringing up their children, we are the body of Christ and we live together in community. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12, we all have gifts and abilities which are unique to us. As individuals, we are not designed to be all things to all people, but in the body of Christ we find those skills and abilities which we lack personally. While parents may take on the whole burden of bringing up their children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, I believe the more biblical model is one in which they partner with their church and school to fully develop their children mentally, physically, and spiritually.

This model allows each institution to use its particular skills to carry out its unique role in the spiritual development of the child.

Parent

Parents have the primary responsibility of training their children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. They do this primarily through creating a secure and loving environment in which they model righteous living and loving God. Some parents who might have training in a particular field may be able to provide instruction in that area as well. Hopefully, parents are providing a sound foundation of biblical knowledge also.

Local church

The church's primary role is worship and fellowship. The congregational gathering of believers to worship God, fellowship together, and study Scripture has its origins in the earliest days of the Church. Parents should expect their church to teach their children the nature of faith, the need for and means of achieving salvation, basic Bible knowledge, and how to worship God communally through song and fellowship.

School

The school's primary role is to teach children the Christian worldview. Assuming that students enter school with a sound idea of the need for salvation (from parents) and the knowledge of how to achieve it (from their church), the Christian school teaches children how to function in the world while remaining consistent in following Christ. This is accomplished by showing students God in all things (Ephesians 4:6). Augustine of Hippo wrote, "let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master" (On Christian Doctrine, II.18.28). It has always been consistent with Christian belief to find God in art, music, science, math, and all other academic disciplines; the more we learn about the world the more we learn about the God who created it.

What a Christian School is

A Christian school:

- Affirms God as the creator and sustainer of all things
- Teaches that all truth begins with God
- Is a place for students to work through issues of doubt and questioning in a supportive environment
- Loves each child unconditionally as a unique creation of God
- Strives for excellence in all things

What a Christian School is not

A Christian School:

- Is not primarily concerned with evangelism (leading students to accept Jesus as their Lord and savior)
- Is not a place for children who are having difficulty at other schools (while we can offer a more accommodating atmosphere for children with unique needs, that is not our primary purpose)

- Is not a shelter from the outside world or negative influences. (We teach children how to interact with a world that might not support their worldview without losing their faith. In other words, we teach them to be "in the world, not of the world" (a phrase derived in part from John 17:11-16))
- Does not take the place of the local church or parents
- Is not public school plus Bible classes (It is so much more than that)

Differences between a Christian School and a Public School

- Cost - Public schools are funded by the federal government through taxes. Christian schools are funded through tuition payments and donations.
- Purpose - Public schools were created during the industrial revolution to ensure the workforce had the technical skills necessary to operate America's new technological infrastructure. More recently, public schools have added a mandate to instill social ideals which the government deems desirable. In doing so, they have adopted the viewpoint that all worldview views are equally valid. Christian schools were created to teach the truth of God and his creation. We believe excellence in education grows out of our thirst for God. We believe that by seeking God first, high levels of attainment in math, science, and literature will follow (Matthew 6:33).
- View of human nature - Public schools believe that all children are born innately good and that with proper encouragement and motivation they will become good and productive citizens. Christian schools believe in the biblical doctrine of the fall of man. They believe that each of us is born sinful and it is only through the grace of God and Christ's redeeming work on the cross that we are made righteous in Him. Christian schools further believe that Satan lies in wait to devour us like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) and children must be taught to be ever vigilant, keeping their eyes always on Christ.
- View of Success - Public schools measure success in terms of standardized tests and college admissions. Christian schools measure success in terms of love for God and love for others. Again, we want our students to do well academically, but we believe seeking God is a necessary prerequisite to academic achievement (Matthew 6:33).

How to Decide if a Christian School is Right for You and Your Family

1. Determine your reasons for considering Christian education.
 - a. Christian education is not for everyone!
 - i. If you are considering Christian education only because your child is having difficulty in the public school or you think your child might benefit from smaller class sizes, we might not be right for you.
 - ii. If you are hoping Christian school will straighten out your rebellious child, we might not be right for you, but
 - b. If you desire to have your child raised in an environment that supports and expands their Christian worldview, you should seriously consider Christian education.
 - c. If your goal is a child who is prepared for life and loves God with all their soul, strength, and mind, you should seriously consider Christian education.
2. Visit us and, if necessary, the public school as well.
 - a. Ask questions of both the teachers and the administration.
 - b. Get a feel for the culture of the school.
 - c. Meet students in your child's grade, if possible.
 - d. Review their vision and mission statements.
 - e. Ask what type of graduates they are trying to produce.
 - f. Ask about their guidelines for hiring new teachers - What skills, training, and certification are required?
3. Pray.
 - a. Ultimately, the decision whether to invest in Christian education is between you and God, so talk to him about it.
 - b. Remember that Scripture reading is an integral part of your relationship with God. If you are not incorporating scripture reading into your prayer life, you are not enjoying a full relationship with God. Be sure to include Scripture reading into your prayer life and decision-making process.
4. Decide.
 - a. This may seem obvious, but at some point you have to make a decision. Far too many parents simply default to the public school

because it is easy, but as a parent you should be intentional about the educational choices you make for your children. Whether you choose public education or Christian education, review your options and make a choice based on how the Lord leads you.

5. "Count the Cost" (Luke 14:28)
 - a. Notice this is the last step in the process. Cost should not be the determining factor in whether Christian education is right for you. Only after you have gone through the previous steps, should you start to consider cost. Research has shown that Christian education uses its resources more efficiently than public schools. That is cold comfort to parents having to pay \$200, \$300, or even \$400 monthly for Christian education. We understand the difficulty. If after visits and prayerful consideration you determine Christian education is the best option for you and your family, contact us. We want to make Christian education accessible to everyone, regardless of income. We have many generous donors who provide scholarship money to help families that can't otherwise afford Christian education. Like us, they believe that everyone who desires training and instruction in the Lord should receive it without cost being an obstacle.

Distinctives of Mountain Lake Christian School

- Excellence in Education - Like Mary, who used her most valuable possession to wash Jesus' feet (John 12:1-8), we believe in giving our best to Christ. Each and every staff member at MLC is dedicated to giving their best to Christ through education. We seek to provide an educational experience that is second-to-none in Southwest Minnesota.
- Personal Attention - It's not just class size that determines how a teacher interacts with their students. At MLC, we use technology and teaching methods to maximize the amount of time the teacher spends one-on-one with each student. We determine your child's best learning method and ensure lessons are presented in such a way as to make the most of their ability to retain the information. We also identify your child's unique skills and help them excel in the areas in which God has gifted them.
- Love - Each student at MLC is treated as a unique and valuable creation of Christ. Our faculty and staff pour love into every student as we try to emulate Christ's love for us.

- Whole Person Concept - We believe that God created human beings as tripartite creatures; in other words, God created us with mental, physical, and spiritual characteristics. We actively engage with our students' spiritual needs in the learning process. We don't believe you can fully educate a person if you only address their physical and mental components.
- Value - MLC remains an outstanding value for the cost. The dedication of our staff and the generosity of our donors allow us to offer top-quality education at a price that remains below the average for private education in the United States.

Average Private School Tuition: 2011-12				
	All Levels	Elementary	Secondary	K-12 Schools
All Schools	\$10,740	\$7,770	\$13,030	\$13,640
Catholic	\$6,890	\$5,330	\$9,790	\$10,230
Other Religious	\$8,690	\$7,960	\$16,520	\$8,160
Non-Sectarian	\$21,510	\$18,170	\$25,180	\$22,440

Source: [Table 205.50](#) Digest of Education Statistics, 2013 Tables, National Center for Education Statistics.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **Why are Christian schools so expensive?**

Christian schools have long been a cost effective method of education. If you were to add the cost of property, sales, and other taxes that go to pay for the public school system, you would find it adds up to a considerable sum. These are costs paid by everyone, whether you have children in the public schools or not. You will continue to pay for public school education long after your last child graduates. Christian schools, on the other hand, are funded solely by parents and generous donors who believe in the mission of Christian education. Numerous studies show that Christian schools are more efficient and effective per dollar spent than their public school counterparts.

- **Will my child be behind their public school peers academically?**

Many people misunderstand our focus on biblical instruction and a Christian worldview to mean we aren't interested in high academic standards. Nothing could be further from the truth. As explained elsewhere, we believe we must give our best to God, which includes our academic performance. Our goal is that our students be as well-prepared academically as any students in the country. In Col.

3:23 Paul reminds us to do our best in everything, as unto the Lord. Consequently, as a school we must place a great deal of emphasis on academic excellence, but we do so within the context of Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

In addition, we work to personalize the curriculum to allow each child to move at their own pace. Our goal is to ensure that our students are neither left behind nor held back. Thus, your child might be ahead or behind their public school peers, but they will be right where they need to be for their current level of academic ability, surrounded by a loving, caring staff committed to ensuring they either catch up or continue to excel.

- **I went to public school and turned out fine. If it was ok for me, why not my kids?**

For the past two hundred years, Christians enjoyed a privileged status in the United States. While not promoted by government, Christianity pervaded our public systems including schools. The world is rapidly changing and in just a few short years, Christianity went from being publicly practiced to being publicly reviled. Make no mistake; the public school system you grew up in no longer exists. Today's schools bear no resemblance to public schools of even ten years ago. Today's schools teach that all worldviews are equal. The message your children are receiving is that there is no special reason to be a Christian; it is one worldview of many and they are all equally valid. If you choose public school for your children, you must ask yourself how you, as a parent, are going to counter that effect.

- **But my school has a lot of Christian teachers .**

This is not a question, but something we hear often. Many public school teachers are wonderful people who love the Lord and children, but they are immersed in a system that overwhelms their best efforts. Ask them if they can explain to their class how the curriculum supports what they learn about God at home and at church. Ask them if they can provide biblical advice when your child is hurt or confused. Ask them if they can promote the Christian worldview over others. Ask them if, all things being equal (pay, resources, etc.), they'd prefer to teach in the Christian school.

- **But are all things equal? Can't my child get a better education in the public school due to greater resources?**

While resources are important, in the classroom the difference between a great teacher and a mediocre one is not money. It is love of the job, love of the children, and a devotion to the mission that makes teachers great. Our teachers have all of

that in abundance. Add to that the fact that the school supports them in integrating their faith into their work and you have a truly top-notch group of teachers.

As more Christian parents come to see the importance of Christian education, the financial support for Christian schools will increase, closing the resource gap. As you consider Christian education, you should consider not only what you will receive from a Christian school, but what you can give back. Is God calling you to be part of the effort to strengthen Christian education in your community?

- **By getting involved in the public school we can make a positive difference. Didn't Jesus command us to go into the world?**

Without any doubt we are commanded to take the gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). But all ministers go through a period of preparation. Paul disappeared for three years after his conversion on the road to Damascus. Jesus' ministry didn't begin until he was 30 years old and not until he spent 40 days in the wilderness preparing. We feel evangelism is a task best suited for mature Christians who have been through a period of preparation for ministry.

While it is certainly within God's power to impact the world through your child, a 2006 study by the Barna group revealed that for two out of every three teens, the influence worked the opposite way. Rather than influencing their peers for Christ, Christian teens were influenced to leave the Church. Those are not good odds and it is not worth the risk to our children.

At the same time, we don't believe in isolating children from the world. Through outreach, sports, and other co- and inter-curricular activities, our students interact with public school children on a frequent basis. They do so, however, in ways in which we can prepare them for how to hold on to their faith in the face of opposition.

Conclusion

Our hope is that this has made you seriously consider Christian education for your child(ren). Please contact us at Mountain Lake Christian School to learn more. We can be reached at 507-427-2010 or at www.gomlc.org . You may email the school office at info@gomlc.org . May God bless you and your family as you seek His will in this important decision.