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Teacher-to-Student Ministry Within the Christian High-School

Joan F. Stratton
jfstratton@liberty.edu

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LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TEACHER-TO-STUDENT MINISTRY
WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

Joan F. Stratton

Lynchburg, VA

April, 2006

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LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER-TO-STUDENT MINISTRY WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Joan F. Stratton

Liberty Theological Seminary, 2006

Mentor: Dr. Michael R. Mitchell

The Christian high school's central distinctive and focus should be the discipling of young believers through teacher-to-student ministry. Such ministry is its primary function as an arm of the Body of Christ and in fulfillment of biblical mandates. This project discusses the roles and needed qualifications of the educators involved in this ministry; it examines the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, and administrators regarding such ministry; and it suggests practical measures that will help schools to prioritize the work of teacher-to-student ministry and to select and nurture the teachers who can fulfill its tremendous potential.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Christian high school offers greater potential for the discipling of young believers than does any other venue. Exceeding both the home and church in resources of time and variety of settings, the Christian high school is uniquely positioned to carry out this mandate of the Body of Christ. The challenge facing today's Christian high school is to understand, centralize, and pursue teacher-to-student ministry as its foremost distinctive and to commit to goals and practices that actively nurture teachers who are prepared to carry out such a ministry.

Teacher-to-student ministry is being defined as follows:

Rooted in prayer and dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit, effective teacher-to-student ministry in the Christian high school setting is the daily, multi-faceted *facilitating* of a heart change within the student so that he may come to accept Christ as Savior and Lord. It is also the *nurturing* of life changes and spiritual growth in the believing student through the influence of biblical teaching, mentoring, and godly example. Teacher-to-student ministry, therefore, includes evangelism as needed, but is primarily an opportunity for the long-term, in-depth discipling of young believers.

The classroom teacher is the key ministry instrument/example for the students. Ideally he will bring to this ministry a background of formal Bible training as well as a habit of passionate, personal pursuit of Jesus Christ, of Scripture, and of prayer. With these in place, he will possess the knowledge, mindset, and lifestyle necessary to teach and advise his students and to offer conscious and unconscious testimony, example, and mentoring.

The administrators must necessarily share all of the above characteristics, and the governing body must be made up of adults who demonstrate a passion for personal discipleship, biblical instruction, and prayer. Together, these leaders must understand that it is their responsibility to be active in enabling and nurturing their teachers toward readiness, spiritually and otherwise, to do the work of teacher-to-student ministry.

Several considerations have motivated this project. First, the extreme cultural pressures that face young believers demand an alternative based upon a strong, scriptural foundation if the young person is to survive spiritually. He must be taught and must see modeled a biblical basis and a godly alternative to today's downward spiral of self-centered lifestyles and self-determined truth. This instruction must be clear and accurate, free of the frequent deceptions of the day which can sound good even to believers if they are not biblically trained.

Second, the crucial concept of the nurturing of one generation by another sweeps through the Old Testament and into the New as seen in the patterns for Israel, the home, and the church. Nevertheless, the Christian high school often functionally substitutes other emphases, perhaps simply by spending increasing amounts of time and resources on other activities involving both teachers and students. Such a loss of center can gradually dictate schedules and budgets and ultimately will cloud thinking regarding goals.

Third, much growth has been attained in academics and in extra-curricular areas for the Christian high school, along with a definite gaining of respectability and patron satisfaction. However, this often seems to lead to contentment with the status quo or to a customer-driven mentality that eventually dilutes spiritual emphases. Instead, the fact of God's blessing and facilitating of the Christian school movement over the past fifty years should motivate the individual school to cultivate a mind-set that seriously and regularly asks, "What is our central reason for existing? What, therefore, should be our focus and its ramifications?" Failure to respond carefully to these questions will result in the loss of a massive opportunity for seriously discipling a considerable number of young believers.

Statement of the Problem

The project will respond to three central questions:

What are the mandate, status, and potential of teacher-to-student ministry within the Christian high school?

What are the roles of educators (faculty, administrators, governing bodies) who are responsible for this ministry?

What are some means of preparing and nurturing educators who fulfill this ministry?

The first question will be discussed from a biblical viewpoint as well as observations based on questionnaires, interviews, and discussions with school administrators and teachers, school patron parents, and students. The second inquiry will outline, from both biblical and practical standpoints, the individual functions of teachers, administrators, and governing bodies, focusing on the goal of producing students who “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”¹ as a result of being in the Christian high school. The third discussion will hinge upon the basic assumption that the classroom teacher is the pivotal adult in this ministry equation, and therefore is the one whose preparation, general and spiritual nurturing, and personal spiritual “maintenance” is of highest importance. The section will include suggestions by which a school can help its teachers be prepared for teacher-to-student ministry.

Statement of Theoretical Basis

A central thesis underlying the project is that the recent emergence of the evangelical Christian school is a God-ordained, modern means for grounding believing teenagers and preparing them to live scriptural lives in the areas of their individual

¹ 2 Pet. 3:18 NIV (New International Version) All scripture references will be taken from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.

calling. Taken in the big-picture sense, it is clear that the Lord has provided such schools with the facilities, the personnel, the freedom, and a significant portion of students' daily time in order to prepare them, from many angles, to know Him and to approach and evaluate life biblically.

The crux of such a ministry is not simply to present to the students the often-mentioned biblical worldview, but more importantly to define a biblically structured view of themselves and of their God. A biblical worldview cannot correctly be superimposed upon a less-than-biblical anthropology or theology. Careful, incisive thinking on these matters will revitalize, and possibly reinterpret, the school's concept of its mandate and what it does to fulfill it.

As a result, if the school desires to help lay a thoroughly biblical foundation in its students, it will need to examine closely those who are charged with accomplishing such a ministry. Essentially, genuine ministry always assumes that one will best communicate what one possesses or knows personally. The reverse is also true. Hence, the purpose of the Christian school must be to hire, develop, and nurture teachers who understand and pursue in their own lives what they desire to replicate in their students. Such a concept may seem self-evident and understandable. The challenge arises for the educator when he is ready to put forth the effort both to discover carefully and then to apply the guidelines of Scripture that define the exemplary believer.

Unfortunately, the tenor of today's accepted thinking, even within the Body of Christ, often resists such a submissive approach toward Scripture and contradicts any desire to be increasingly structured by it. To suggest such outside control in educational circles often flies in the face of a customary attitude of independence and self-sufficiency, a

mind-set which can be destructive to Christian teachers. In contrast, this project urges an examination of the average Christian high school and teacher—the perceptions, practices, and objectives of both—and encourages them toward seeing themselves as primarily instruments for God’s purposes of conversion, spiritual formation, and the teaching of excellence in all areas of life for the students within their purview.

The Christian school should never exist for the lesser motives of being an escape from the secular or as simply a nice place to do nice things with nice people. To avoid such unworthy motives, those who set the course of each Christian school will be urged to examine constantly their own spiritual value system and to be pro-active in cultivating whatever will nurture the Christian school’s central ministry.

Statement of Methodology

In order to reach understanding and improvement, the project endeavors to raise questions in the minds of Christian school teachers and administrators as they consider aspects of their work which may rarely be purposefully discussed. Its point of reference for teachers will be the biblical model of a believer desirous of being able and ready to make disciples. The project will discuss ways in which these school personnel can maintain that state of being, and what they can do for each other and for themselves so that they are optimally useful in teacher-to-student ministry.

Chapter 2, “A Discussion of the Mandate, Status, and Potential of Teacher-to-Student Ministry,” will lay a foundation of three components. It will discuss the biblical mandate and pattern of older believers teaching and discipling younger ones, pointing out that teachers are one of God’s gifts to the Body of Christ. It will outline the essentials of

building a life worth emulating through pursuit of a relationship with Christ, increasing knowledge of and submission to Scripture, and a constant and serious prayer life. There will be an examination of responses from students, parents, teachers, and administrators to questionnaires and interviews conducted in order to understand their experiences, concepts, and desires regarding teacher-to-student ministry. The intention of these tools is to increase insight and raise discussion, not to present statistical or formal qualitative and quantitative research. Chapter 2 will point out that the Christian high school is a large arena of settings in which these elements can influence young believers. The chapter will also raise the question of whether teacher-to-student ministry is included in a school's stated goals, understood clearly, and actually put into action. It will ask how this central distinctive is borne out in practical areas such as teacher-hiring or school schedules. Last, the chapter will envision the potential of teacher-to-student ministry, noting that the facilities, varied settings, number of adult believers involved, possibilities of interaction, and amount of time with students offer nearly limitless possibilities of interaction and influence.

Chapter 3, "An Examination of the Roles of Educators Responsible for Teacher-to-Student Ministry," will discuss the position of the classroom teacher as a front-line minister/discipler whose preparation of biblical training and whose personal spiritual formation are as important as his subject-area credentials, if not more so. Both areas of qualification must be current. The administrator and its governing body must be similarly convinced of the necessity of biblical training and spiritual growth and health, and should be models of both. They should be examples and leaders of such while also being the support system for the teaching faculty through mutual prayer, encouragement,

fellowship, and biblically wise leadership. They should be the pace-setters and facilitators for nurturing the ministry and the teacher/ministers, not just far-off figures who make policy or sign checks. Chapter 3 speaks to the heart of the project, obviously dealing with areas that only the personnel themselves can decide to undertake. However, that does not remove its emphasis from the realm of the possible. The project hopes to connect the dots clearly so that the entire school leadership can see both the bases and ramifications.

Chapter 4, “Proposals for Describing and Nurturing of Educators Who Fulfill Teacher-to-Student Ministry,” will present a number of suggestions as to the mechanics of obtaining and maintaining school personnel who are equipped to facilitate effective, biblical teacher-to-student ministry. Preparation suggestions will include a look at requiring formal biblical training as a hiring pre-requisite as well as an on-going practice. The chapter will suggest an in-service requirement of training in at least an elementary understanding of Christian psychology, biblical anthropology and an acquaintance with the symptoms and causes of a number of areas in which young people struggle today.

Nurturing suggestions will offer specific practices the school may adopt in order to encourage carefully focused, ongoing, spiritual, biblical, and professional growth in its personnel. Suggestions will be divided into “internal” (programs developed by the school itself for its specific needs, use of in-house expertise if available) and “external” (use of outside experts in areas of specific need or interest such as special speakers; video series; groups ministering in areas of specific needs such as eating disorders, sexual issues, addictions; and those able to speak to the issues of a biblical response/contribution to

culture). Large-group, multi-faceted training opportunities will also be encouraged (ACSI, MACSA, IICSE conventions).

Chapter 4 will also encourage providing tools for school personnel such as a faculty library that will include books and video series on ministry, Bible commentaries, Christian psychology, spiritual enrichment, Christian classics, and works by those who have contributed positively to Christian school literature. Another tool would be the availability of funds for continuing faculty education. The chapter will also point out that, for the Christian teacher, one of the greatest resources will be a godly administrator who will lead, support, and pray for the teacher in his front-line ministry.

It is hoped that the Christian high school will see its strong points as well as its correctible contradictions, both philosophical and practical. The suggestions regarding the nurturing of teachers may encourage thought about the school's priority structures and value systems. If fundamental changes need to be made, the discussions of mandate and implications will be foundational.

Statement of Limitations

The research and discussions addressed in this project will focus upon what can be called the "evangelical" Christian high school that has developed within the last fifty years. Denominational schools such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Seventh Day Adventist, many of which have existed from earlier dates, will be excluded. The project will, however, include input from Lancaster Mennonite School because of that school's important position in Lancaster, PA, and because of its exemplary work in pioneering the nurturing of its teachers to fulfill its definitions of ministry.

The interviews with administrators will involve only Christian high schools which are located in the general area of Lancaster, PA. The questionnaires or interviews seeking teacher responses will be gathered from the faculty of Mount Calvary Christian School, Elizabethtown, PA, from Lititz Christian School, Lititz, PA, and from Lancaster Bible College. Parent and student questionnaires will reflect responses from patrons of Mount Calvary Christian School, Elizabethtown, PA.

The project will not include a discussion of specific methodologies of ministering to the older teenage believer. Rather, it will concern itself with the biblical and practical mandates and motivating concepts that prompt such a ministry, and it will look at the personal qualifications needed by those who minister in a Christian high school.

The literature search of materials relevant to the emphases of this project will include books, periodicals, and online resources, past and current, which contribute positively to the evangelical Christian school movement. The project will not examine or debate materials that disagree with the basic concept of education that is Christian.

The questionnaires found in the appendix are intended to inform the topics mentioned earlier, to give insight, and raise helpful discussion. They are not for the purpose of formal research or statistical quantitative or qualitative analysis.

Assumptions underlying the project are

the authority of Scripture in setting the patterns for discipling students as well as for the preparing and nurturing of teachers.

the legitimacy of regarding the Christian school as an arm of the work of the Body of Christ, whether the school is technically church-related or not.

the value and benefits of education that is Christian in comparison to education that is exclusively secular.

the viewpoint that teacher-to-student ministry is an aspect of Christian school

education that needs revitalization primarily based upon attention to the preparation and nurturing of the Christian classroom teacher.

Review of the Literature

The project's bibliography is necessarily broad. Though not organized by categories, it includes resources that are helpful for educators or parents with varying levels of training and exposure. The resources speak to several areas and offer information that will expand possibilities for deepened ministry among Christian high school students.

A number of the resources are very current in speaking to specific aspects of the Christian school classroom. The title of Donovan Graham's *Teaching Redemptively: Bringing Grace and Truth into Your Classroom* embodies the thought of several recent books that deal with a needed emphasis on implementation of biblical truth in classroom practice and content.

Several classic and standard works are included which were written by educators who were instrumental in the development of Christian schools over the last fifty years. Such books as *The Christian Mind* by Harry Blamires have contributed significantly to the worldview and ideology of education that is Christian.

Readable books that include the basics of biblical anthropology and Christian psychology are helpful to parents or educators who may lack specialized training in these areas. *Attachments* by Tim Clinton and Gary Sibcy is excellent in this category.

Some of the resources center on information that parents and educators can use to identify and understand a number of the areas in which teenagers may struggle, whether physically, socially, or psychologically. Les Parrott's *Helping the Struggling Adolescent*,

for example, lists symptoms and suggested helps for such problems as eating disorders, pornography involvement, and peer pressure.

Several very strong works are available to help teachers and parents learn how they can become biblical and spiritual influences in their students' lives. Paul Tripp's *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens* is insightful and directive.

Representative of a growing realization that educators and parents must be willing and able to observe and understand the teen culture of the day in order to minister to teens are Walt Mueller's *Understanding Today's Youth Culture* and his recent *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture*. Such information is often difficult for parents and teachers to accept, but it is a crucial ingredient if they are to have insight regarding things that surround and often defeat young believers.

Finally, and importantly, a number of resources offer a clear, biblical foundation upon which to facilitate spiritual formation on a personal level for the educator or parent. John Stott's *The Contemporary Christian* and Paul Tripp's *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* are thorough and incisive.

The bibliography does not include resources prepared primarily for the students themselves or that center on specific methodologies of ministry with teenagers. It does not include thesis work by Liberty University students since none was found that specifically dealt with this aspect of Christian school work.

CHAPTER 2

THE MANDATE, STATUS, AND POTENTIAL OF TEACHER-TO-STUDENT MINISTRY

The Biblical Mandate

“One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.”¹ The scriptural pattern of mature believers instructing and modeling godliness to younger believers is unmistakable and is commanded or assumed in several settings. In the Old Testament it was the basis of instruction in godliness and was labeled as a foundation for national survival and blessing. The home was assumed to be at the heart of such instruction, as indicated by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-25. His directions were specific regarding the parents’ daily, contextual instruction of their children regarding God’s law. “These commandments...are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up....Be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”²

Though often minimized by habit or schedule in modern life, Scripture’s direction for the strong influence and instrumentality of the family unit in spiritual education cannot be ignored. The communication of one generation to another is crucial because “...the

¹ Ps. 145:4.

² Deut. 6:6, 7, 12.

things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of the law.”³ The implication is clear that if such instruction does not take place, neither will children be able to remember the Lord or to obey and serve Him.

As the New Testament church was forming, the mandate would be repeated clearly to the Ephesians, including the fact that failure to instruct children regarding spiritual things brings negative results. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”⁴

Old Testament Patterns

The biblical mandate finds numerous illustrations. Elijah taught and mentored Elisha, preparing him to take leadership among the prophets. It was recognized that Elisha mirrored his master, and that the Spirit that had rested on his teacher became his also.⁵ Likewise, numerous references in Proverbs point to the habit and importance of instruction by parents and wise elders. Such instruction should be accepted by the young person who fears God. “My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”⁶ Along with others, the book of Proverbs points out that godly instruction, which is accepted wholeheartedly by a young person, is the foundation for wisdom and for living in a manner that pleases God and invites His blessing. The individual who learns to have “his

³ Deut. 29:29.

⁴ Eph. 6:4.

⁵ 2 Kgs. 2:15.

⁶ Prov. 2:1, 2, 5.

delight in the Law of the Lord”⁷ will avoid rebellion and the consequences of becoming a mocker and scorner.

It would be difficult to find a more pervasive pattern and assumption in the Old Testament than the importance of faithfully and accurately imparting God’s truth to the younger generation of believers, whether within the family unit or by other older believers who have the opportunity and position to do so. In fact, the function of elder-to-younger instruction is such a deeply rooted assumption that more of Scripture’s time seems to be spent in urging the young hearers to be sure to take advantage of the teaching than in calling for the instruction itself.

New Testament Patterns

The New Testament echoes the patterns of the Old both within the family structure and within the Church. In the context of the early church, Paul states that teachers are a gift of God to the Body of Christ⁸ and thereby indicates that teaching is a necessary ingredient of church life. Not only is the pattern repeated and assumed, but there are also a number of New Testament mentoring relationships whose dynamics are instructive.

Mary herself demonstrated a knowledge of scripture and of her national heritage in the Magnificat.⁹ In the temple, at age twelve, Jesus was “among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” No one was particularly amazed that he should be

⁷ Ps. 1:2.

⁸ 1 Cor. 12:28.

⁹ Lk. 1:47-55.

doing that; rather, they were amazed at his understanding.¹⁰ Though Mary and Joseph would not have been able financially to take advantage of what might have been considered a good education for Jesus, still the custom of educating children in the scriptures was an obvious part of the culture of the day.

Another mentoring and teaching relationship existed between Barnabas and Mark. Though there are few biblical details about their relationship, Luke does make it clear that Barnabas was devoted to giving young Mark the training opportunities that would prepare him for ministry. He wanted to take Mark along with Paul and himself on their second missionary journey even against Paul's wishes. Barnabas was so definite about his vision for Mark that Paul and Barnabas separated.¹¹ However, Barnabas must have been correct and must have been an effective teacher and mentor because Paul later describes Mark as being "...helpful to me in my ministry."¹²

The relationship of Aquilla and Priscilla with Apollos exemplifies purposeful mentoring and instruction within the Body of Christ. Apollos may not have been a young person, but he was young in the faith and in need of capable instruction. Two seasoned believers, Aquilla and Priscilla, were God's instruments in Apollos' life as they "... explained to him the way of God more adequately."¹³ In doing so, they prepared him for a strong ministry of clarifying the Gospel for his fellow Jews.¹⁴

¹⁰ Lk. 1:46, 47.

¹¹ Ac. 15:36-40.

¹² 2 Tim. 4:11.

¹³ Ac. 18:26.

¹⁴ Ac. 18:27, 28.

Probably the most detailed New Testament example of biblical instruction and mentoring is the relationship of Paul and Timothy. Timothy's internship began with Paul and Silas on their second missionary journey.¹⁵ Paul continued, apparently, to invest himself in Timothy until he later wrote First and Second Timothy to him as Timothy worked as a pastor. Timothy had become an example of "sincere faith" for whom Paul prayed and whose fellowship he valued greatly.¹⁶ In his two letters Paul gave much instruction about the work of the pastor, the life of the church, and the dangers of false doctrine and those who bring it into the church. Paul encouraged Timothy personally in his faith, his conduct, his personal walk with the Lord, and his perseverance in ministry. Of special importance in this example is the fact that Timothy had seen in Paul's own life the examples of what Paul was writing to him in precept. The teaching, therefore, was doubly effective.

Dynamics within the Biblical Examples

Transposing the biblical mandates and examples into the work and ministry potential of the Christian high school can begin with recognizing several important dynamics. First, the older or more mature believer selflessly invested his time in the ones he taught and mentored. Jesus spent three years, day in and day out, with the Twelve. Paul took Timothy on lengthy missionary trips, as did Barnabas for Mark. Aquilla and Priscilla opened their home to Apollos for whatever length of time was needed to instruct him. Though the activities may not be the same today, the principle remains that effective teacher-to-student ministry will require a willing, and probably large, investment of one's

¹⁵ Ac. 16:1-3.

¹⁶ 1 Tim. 1:3-5.

personal time and availability to the student whom the Lord brings for mentoring relationships.

Second, prayer and teaching were constant ingredients in such mentoring. Jesus taught his disciples constantly and, by His own statement, prayed for them.¹⁷ Paul prayed for Timothy¹⁸ and instructed him on a number of topics. Both these relationships required that the mentor/teacher know his learners well, care for them deeply, keep abreast of where they were in their spiritual growth, and give clear instruction. There was contact and dialog. In fact, Paul had so thoroughly mentored Timothy that he felt confident as he sent Timothy to the church in Corinth, knowing that Timothy would clearly explain Paul's message and demonstrate to them Paul's example.¹⁹

Third, the teacher/mentors—Jesus, Paul, Barnabas, Aquilla and Priscilla—were all exemplary. All could urge their learners to follow their example. They were exemplary in their knowledge of scripture, in their daily living, in their care for others. Like them, the prepared Christian teacher will explain a truth that contrasts with the world around them and will challenge their students to commit their lives to it. Such ministry from older, more mature believers to younger ones is the backbone of the mission of the Church, and therefore of the Christian high school in its function as an arm of the Church and as a means through which to “make disciples”²⁰ and to “feed my lambs.”²¹ The

¹⁷ Jn. 17:9.

¹⁸ 2 Tim. 1:3.

¹⁹ 1 Cor. 4:15-17.

²⁰ Mt. 28:19.

²¹ Jn. 21:15.

magnitude of this mandate and pattern in scripture should establish it as central to the structure, goals, and activities of the Christian high school.

Whatever the setting, the mandate carries with it clear ramifications for the more mature believers who are to instruct or mentor the younger. Unreserved submission to Scripture, ongoing pursuit of biblical knowledge, a lifestyle resulting from a pursuit of Jesus Christ, service and fellowship with the Body of Christ, and an foundational prayer life should be daily goals and developed habits of the mentor. Focus on one's own spiritual formation and growth must be firmly established and ongoing so that the mature believers are examples and resources for young believers. For the teacher in the Christian high school, personal spiritual growth and maturity are never optional; they are essentials without which the biblical mandate for the Christian school cannot be fulfilled.

The Current Status

In order to develop a concept of the current status of teacher-to-student ministry within today's Christian high school, input has been gathered from students, parents, administrators, and teachers in order to discover their perceptions of what that ministry is, how important it is or should be, what they would like it to include and accomplish within the school context, and what the schools either currently do or could do to nurture and support teachers in that ministry. Over 200 informal questionnaires and interviews have been used to contact these groups in the greater Lancaster, PA, area in order to discern their thoughts, practices, and desires regarding teacher-to-student ministry. The responses create an informal, representative, up-close check of teacher-to-student ministry from various angles, not necessarily a statement of how it should be correctly

perceived or conducted. The impressions, expectations, and desires also help to provide an informed starting point for change and improvement.

Student Responses

The Student Questionnaire (appendix 1) was designed to let students, grades nine through twelve, anonymously express thoughts regarding their own spiritual formation, personal goals, desires and experiences regarding adult mentoring, and their degree of interest and satisfaction with attending a Christian high school. The questionnaire was also used as a basis for a focus-group discussion with twelfth grade students to discuss their school's provision of teacher-to-student ministry or the lack of it. The 105 students who filled out the questionnaire were urged to respond honestly with negative or positive comments and to avoid giving any particular answers simply because they might be considered the acceptable ones. The same type of in-put was solicited in the focus-group discussion.

On the questionnaire the students were invited to indicate whether they were believers; to what extent they desired to pursue spiritual growth; whether they had central, spiritual goals for themselves; and whether they wanted or had adult, spiritual mentors and examples in their lives. They were also asked to indicate who was the most exemplary, adult Christian they knew. Finally, the Questionnaire asked specifically what their high school teachers could do to help them know God and Scripture better.

The questions designed to indicate the students' spiritual formation revealed that 96 percent were believers, and 98 percent regarded spiritual growth and relationship with the Lord as their main goal. Ninety-two percent felt that it is important to understand

Scripture well at this point in their lives, and 92 percent believed that the Bible is the best, true guide. Eighty-six percent agreed that they would be glad to find an adult believer who could help them know the Lord better, and roughly 72 percent felt that it was not difficult to find an adult who could answer spiritual questions. About 59 percent said that though they were believers, they did not work hard at knowing God. Hence, it appeared that a majority of the surveyed students were open to adult instruction and mentoring and saw a need for personal spiritual growth and orientation. However, only 10 percent of the students indicated that their schoolteachers were the adults whom they felt best exemplified what a Christian should be, an observation that could have been colored by the nature of the classroom environment and the students' individual concepts of what characterizes a Christian.

When the students responded to questions regarding their relationship to the Christian high school itself, 90 percent said that they were glad to attend there. Roughly 94 percent agreed that the main advantage of being there was the Christian leaders and teachers.

Clearly most of the students were in general agreement with the idea of their own spiritual growth and the involvement of older believers in that process. When asked for suggestions and comments regarding what their teachers could do to help them grow spiritually, the students' comments covered the spectrum. One student offered, "I would [like] to have more freedom to explore. We are too strict and concise about stupid little things that it gets annoying (sic)" while another said, "I'm learning about God and the Scripture here in school and I'm satisfied. Good job!" In the middle, however, were useful requests for improvement:

1. Better teacher-to-student relationships

2. More teacher interest in students' lives
3. Time in the schedule for mentoring groups
4. More biblical integration and discussion in classes other than the Bible class
5. Teacher-led, small-group Bible studies
6. More prayer time in classes
7. More personal testimony by the teachers
8. Increased opportunities for accountability to adult believers

On the whole, the comments and suggestions were thoughtful, fair, and helpful; they indicated desires among the students for spiritual growth and for interaction from the teachers. Predictably, a few were hostile and seemed preoccupied by personal or specific irritations. However, overall, the responses revealed surprisingly fertile soil for the teachers to cultivate. A number of students felt that a good job was already being done, which indicated that their teachers have some good practices upon which to build.

Parent Responses

The Parent Questionnaire (appendix 2) gave school patron parents an opportunity to indicate anonymously their opinion of the importance of various aspects of their child's experience in the Christian high school. The items for response included various school "extras" (fine arts, athletics, ministry opportunities), exposure to believers (godly teachers, Christian friends), various aspects of training (conduct guidelines, career preparation, discipling by Christian adults), and elements of curriculum (academics, biblical instruction). Parents were also asked to indicate more general but central reasons for sending their child to a Christian high school, and they were requested to indicate

what they felt was the most important thing the Christian teachers could do for their students. Lastly, the parents were asked to state what they felt was at the core of teacher-to student ministry and to share any additional thoughts and desires they had regarding the importance and essentials of teacher-to-student ministry.

The Parent Questionnaire was mailed to school families and generated over a 76 percent response that in itself indicated a considerable level of parental interest in the topic. Fifty percent of those returning the questionnaire took time to include a written response in the comment section at the end of the questionnaire.

In the first section of the questionnaire the parents rated the importance of twelve aspects of their child's education experience. They could choose to assign the ranking of highest importance to as many of the aspects as they desired. The following listing indicates the percentages of respondents who rated the various areas as being of highest importance.

1. Academics - 50 percent
2. Godly teachers - 50 percent
3. Building a relationship with Christ - 48 percent
4. Biblical instruction - 42 percent
5. Christian friends - 32 percent
6. Being disciplined - 29 percent
7. Conduct guidelines - 27 percent
8. Learning to share one's faith - 24 percent
9. Career preparation - 23 percent
10. Ministry opportunities - 21 percent

11. Fine arts - 7 percent

12. Athletics - 5 percent

When the parents were asked to choose a definition of the Christian high school, 42 percent gave the highest ranking to “a place where godly teachers can disciple my student by word and example.” Thirty-four percent chose “a place where my student receives good academic training.” Related to this was a question asking what the parents wanted generally from the teachers. Fifty percent gave top priority to “I want the teachers to know and communicate their academic areas well,” while 39 percent chose “I want the teachers to know scripture as well as they do their academic areas.”

The questionnaire also gave opportunity for the parents to indicate a general goal for their child. Eighty percent chose “I want my student most of all to learn to see the world and himself as God does.”

When given an opportunity to express their own impressions and desires regarding teacher-to-student ministry—its essentials, importance, and specifics—a number of parents shared thoughtful responses. Some partial quotes will be representative.

“The most important thing to me as a parent is a teacher in a Christian school living out their personal relationship with Christ in every area of their lives.”

“...look at each student the way Jesus looks at us...build into your students life both academically and spiritually...I think many of the kids that attend Christian school do not have a mentor relationship...How many really know Jesus?...This could be a wonderful ministry.”

“...presenting the choice (vocational) to enter into full time Christian service...”

“I expect a Christian teacher to do their absolute best in teaching their subject...be approachable....If they are not sensitive, they are not representing or modeling Christ...A Christian teacher/minister is to educate and work with the whole person that the student is—mind, body, soul, and spirit/emotions.”

“...legalist standards...inhibit the kids’ interest in being ‘like’ those teachers or

pursuing Christian things.”

“Teachers have the opportunity to share how God’s salvation and time spent in His Word will change their lives.”

“...take a special interest in my students and build a relationship with them...not only to hear about the love of God but to see it.”

“I think of teachers as extended parents to my children. Therefore, the qualities that make good parents (love, respect, consistency and discipline) need to be seen in teachers.”

“...include the student in his/her prayers and have a vision that goes beyond the walls of the classroom.”

“...a godly example without being perfect and not afraid to admit how the Lord has worked in your life and used various incidents to draw you closer to Him.”

“...even if they may not be a straight A student or star athlete...emphasize doing your best for God.”

“...having Him first in their lives so that their love for the Lord overflows in all they do and say. The best teachers are those who are still learning and growing.”

“...help determining the will of God for their lives and the purpose of the gifts He has given the individual...Show interest in the personal, career, and spiritual choices of each child and guiding them.”

“I appreciate a consistent, godly character in the teachers. When the students can daily see this example (in and out of the classroom setting), a solid foundation is being laid for their future.”

“Teachers can help by watching for negative changes in students....Sometimes parents can be blind....A teacher can be more neutral and objective.”

One parent’s comments in particular summarized the essence of teacher-to-student ministry: “My heart’s desire is for our teachers to have a passion for Christ and His righteousness which is incorporated into everything they do. This is lifestyle Christianity. . . . As we live this way, then our hearts’ desire will be to minister to students. How can we mentor someone if we ourselves are just going through the motions? . . . May I as a parent and you as a teacher live a transparent, authentic life to

show the next generation that there is such a thing as abundant life, absolute truth, and something worth pouring your life into.”

Obviously many things can color a parent’s desires or insights as he contemplates his child’s needs, education, and future. The overall impression, however, is that patron parents of the Christian high school are rarely, if ever, actively opposed to the discipling of their child. At the very least they are willing to accept spiritual influence if, with it, they can be sure of good academics, appropriate discipline and decency, and opportunities for growth and maturity for their student. Indeed, the majority of patron parents definitely desire serious spiritual influence and modeling for their children and are apparently depending on the Christian school to be a major factor in their children’s overall growth and formation process. Such parental agreement and expectations open tremendous opportunities for the Christian teacher to pursue.

Teacher Responses

The Teacher Questionnaire (appendix 3) requested anonymous responses and provided an opportunity for teachers in the Christian high school to define teacher-to-student ministry and to estimate its importance to the adults that make up their Christian school community: fellow teachers, administration, governing bodies, and patron parents. Teachers were asked whether goals of teacher-to-student ministry were clearly expressed and communicated to the school community and whether the goals were reflected in the school’s hiring standards as well as day-to-day activities. They were asked what might hinder such ministry in general, and they were asked to mention things what would help them individually to improve their own outreach. They were asked to discuss whether

Christian high schools generally seem to allow other emphases to overshadow spiritual endeavors. Finally, they were asked to share some of their own methods in teacher-to-student ministry.

Since the classroom teacher is the crucial adult in the teacher-to-student ministry equation, the answers of the questionnaire respondents are particularly significant in detecting the status of that ministry. As front-line workers, is their definition adequate? Have they looked closely enough at the overall nature of the work? What frustrates or hinders them? What do they see as necessary, nurturing supports for their ministry? How do they presently attempt to reach their students?

The teachers noted various characteristics of teacher-to-student ministry.

1. Availability to spend time with students
2. Communication of concern, interest, encouragement
3. Time spent outside of class; Bible studies, devotions
4. Being an exemplary believer, modeling Christ in word and life
5. Mentoring, discipling, especially in small groups
6. Relationship-based, God-given ministry
7. Readiness to counsel
8. Impacting lives through biblical truth, relationship, and academics
9. A way of pursuing God's glory
10. Helping students discern their identity in Christ
11. Helping students focus on Christ and his working in their lives

In assessing the importance of teacher-to-student ministry among the adults of the school community, 60 percent of the teachers felt that they themselves placed it in the

highest priority while the other 40 percent placed it as equal to their emphasis upon academics. Thirty-three percent felt that their school's governing body held such ministry in highest priority, and 60 percent felt that it was viewed as having importance equal to academics. Forty-seven percent of the responding teachers felt that their administration viewed the ministry as its highest priority, and an equal amount said that administration emphasized teacher-to-student ministry equally with academics. Twenty-six percent of the teachers believed that such ministry was the highest priority of their teaching colleagues while 60 percent felt that colleagues gave it equal priority with academics. Finally, only 26 percent of the teachers felt that teacher-to-student ministry was the top priority of patron parents, while 66 percent of the teachers felt that it was one of several priorities among patron parents.

Eighty-six percent of the teachers felt that their school had clearly stated goals of teacher-to-student ministry, and 73 percent felt that those goals were clearly communicated to staff and school families. However, few of the teachers mentioned hiring practices or requirements that specifically examined their ability or preparation for teacher-to-student ministry. Hiring requirements mentioned were mostly basics that would be desired for any kind of Christian ministry:

1. Profession of faith
2. Involvement in a local church
3. Leadership qualities
4. A habit of daily devotions
5. Goals and philosophy that coincide with the school's goals and philosophy
6. Flexibility

Only two teachers mentioned hiring specifics that bordered on specific preparation for teacher-to-student ministry: knowledge of the Word and a preference for hiring graduates of Christian universities or Bible colleges.

The teachers were asked to identify factors that may cause those in their position to fail in fulfilling teacher-to-student ministry. Sixty-six percent selected “lack of time;” followed by 53 percent choosing “feeling uncomfortable with discussing problems or spiritual matters.” Thirty-three percent included “inability to answer students’ questions.” When the teachers were asked to identify reasons for their own frustration or discouragement in teacher-to-student ministry, 60 percent selected “lack of time in the schedule,” and 44 percent included “lack of attention to the issue.”

In order to end on a hopeful note, the teachers were asked to select factors that would help prepare them personally for effective teacher-to-student ministry. Sixty percent selected “more prayer/sharing with like-minded colleagues,” 46 percent selected “more biblical training,” and 33 percent included “more Christian psychology training.”

In answer to the question of whether they felt that Christian high schools generally emphasize other aspects of school life above spiritual matters, 53 percent said “yes;” only 6 percent said no. Most mentioned an overemphasis of sports as the perception upon which they based a positive response.

Finally, the questionnaire requested that the teachers share their own ways of ministering to the students. Their responses included

1. Being available to talk and pray with students
2. Leading small-group, student Bible studies, even over the summer break

3. Discussing how the students' relationship with the Lord fits into their future plans
4. Classroom devotions and prayer
5. Service projects
6. Out-of-classroom time and activities
7. Sharing personal testimony
8. Discussing Scripture's application to current issues
9. Asking how the student's walk with Christ is
10. Being friendly, showing care
11. Eating lunch with students
12. Lunch time Bible studies
13. Reaching out, gaining students' trust
14. Remembering personal things in order to connect with students
15. Scripture posters in classroom
16. Finding ways to let students know they are important
17. One-on-one discussions
18. Corporate and private prayer
19. Having a life that overflows
20. Planning spiritual emphasis for each lesson
21. Allowing for spontaneous discussions of spiritual things
22. After-school counseling

The teachers' responses communicated a seriousness regarding teacher-to-student ministry. Though most of the respondents indicated efforts on their own part to reach

students on a personal basis, they could not point to measures established by the school to facilitate that ministry in practical ways. Nor did they see, beyond brief morning devotions and annual conference attendance, any major school structures that regularly nurtured and specifically encouraged the individual teacher in his personal, spiritual preparation for the work. Most of the teachers did credit administration, colleagues, and governing bodies with desiring, and possibly assuming, the presence of teacher-to-student ministry, but beyond that there was a lack of specifics that would support its fulfillment.

It was noticeable in the responses that the teachers tended to define teacher-to-student ministry in terms of what they *do* rather than any mention of ministry being essentially what they *are*. This viewpoint, though perhaps inadvertent, suggests one of the largest blind spots regarding teacher-to-student ministry among Christian educators today and brings into focus a topic that will be discussed in chapter 3.

Administrator Responses

Face-to-face interviews (appendix 4) were conducted with the administrators of six Christian high schools (including one middle school) in the greater Lancaster, PA, area, and with the chairman of the Teacher Education Department of Lancaster Bible College. The interviews had a two-fold purpose. First, they sought to understand the degree of importance teacher-to-student ministry held in the thinking of these school leaders. Those interviewed were asked to share their perceptions of the definition and goals of teacher-to-student ministry, its purpose and potential, its priority within their schools, what outcomes they hoped for in their students' lives, and whether these goals were delineated and communicated to teachers and parents. Second, they asked how the

administrators' perceptions and goals in the area of teacher-to-student ministry were translated into their hiring practices and standards and into the structure of school activities that might aid the individual teacher. The interviews also inquired about what the schools were doing to nurture the teacher personally and spiritually in his ability to carry out the ministry.

The concepts of the administrators are a crucial piece in the puzzle of teacher-to-student ministry because, as will be seen later, though the classroom teacher is the front-line person in the work, the administrator is the key pacesetter and the one who often makes or breaks the spiritual success of the school. His decisions, his personal example, his commitment to Scripture and prayer, his interest in the work, his understanding of the mandate and character of the Christian school, and his degree of spiritual and practical support for those on the front lines will set the tenor of the whole undertaking.

With regard to a definition of teacher-to-student ministry, most of the administrators pointed to various goals of the schools such as assisting parents with educating their children, supporting the home and church, creating a Christ-centered experience, or helping students understand that the good life includes both learning and glorifying God. Several mentioned Christian role-model teachers and bringing students to salvation and growth toward the image of Christ; two mentioned the need for relationship between teachers and students.

In discussing their interest in teacher-to-student ministry, only one administrator termed it the top priority, and two others said it was a co-priority with academics. Another hoped that academics was not eclipsing ministry. Two pointed to their schools' religious activities (e.g., chapel, ministry outreach) as evidence of the presumed

importance of teacher-to-student ministry. Most of the administrators felt that their teachers and governing personnel shared the administrator's viewpoint on its priority position. Some were uncertain about how important it was in the minds of their patron families. One school was in the process of investigating family expectations on the topic. The rest felt that families generally assumed or expected teacher-to-student ministry to be present, whether they desired it or not.

Most of the administrators did not seem to have thought deeply about the nature or working aspects of teacher-to-student ministry; it did not seem to be an overriding preoccupation. This was apparent from their frequent lack of a more-than-surface definition of the ministry and the absence of specific school practices or standards that aimed at its accomplishments. At the end of their interviews, two administrators mused that it was an important topic and that it had been good to ponder it for a while. Only Lancaster Mennonite School had set aside time in the school schedule for student groups to be mentored by teachers, and only Lancaster Mennonite was developing a program of instruction for teachers in order to prepare them for campus ministry. The tone of most of the administrators' responses indicated that, though they wanted teacher-to-student ministry to be present in their schools, its presence was hoped for or assumed, not carefully defined. It was not actively and specifically pursued nor was much intentional provision made for it. It was not a major, well-developed distinctive that might help shape many school aspects and activities.

With regard to their goals for the students, all the administrators did want to see results of teacher-to-student ministry in their graduates. They mentioned several goals.

1. Social service in the secular and Christian communities

2. Personal wholeness and wellness
3. Acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ
4. Outworking of faith in their lives
5. On-going growth and realistic dealing with needs and problems

Though several administrators expressed a desire to check on the progress of their graduates, only one school was formulating an instrument for measuring the development of its students through a Graduate Profile that outlined the academic, spiritual, and lifestyle qualities the school hopes to cultivate in its students. This was to be used as a sort of end-product checklist and also as a set of goals to work toward while the students are in school. It could also be used as a guide for plans of school activities and emphases.

The absence of detailed, stated spiritual goals was disappointing. It raised the question of the schools' practical seriousness about a matter that should be their central distinctive. Though the results of ministry, especially among young people, are rarely seen quickly, still it is helpful to have the focus of specific goals.

The third area of discussion with the administrators dealt with the relationship of teacher-to-student ministry goals to hiring practices and the nurturing of teaching personnel. They readily mentioned desirable teacher qualifications, a number of which would obviously contribute to teacher-to-student ministry.

1. Love and be capable in one's subject area (appropriate degrees and training).
2. Demonstrate a love for students.
3. Be excited about one's faith; be able to bring it into the classroom.
4. Understand and accept pertinent philosophy and doctrinal statements.
5. Be non-legalistic.

6. Be able to inspire.
7. Be flexible, humble, able to take criticism.
8. Be involved in one's church.
9. Show evidence of personal growth.

When asked how the schools nurtured the teachers who are expected to carry out teacher-to-student ministry, the administrators noted two types of activities.

Internal Activities

1. Prayer and devotion times
2. Teacher care groups
3. Monthly in-house, in-service meetings
4. Weekly in-house training sessions to address current in-house issues/needs
5. Personal thank-you notes from the administrator for praise-worthy actions
6. Use of teacher advisory committees to facilitate communication between teachers and administration
7. Financial assistance (health and life insurance, tuition for faculty children)
8. Concern for teachers' time; provision of volunteer staff help
9. Planned social times for the staff

External Activities

1. Outside resource speakers
2. Attendance at ACSI and MACSA activities or Mennonite Educators' Conference
3. Development of a ministry-credentialed training program for teachers
4. Field trips to observe how other schools/churched handle aspects of the word

5. Financial assistance for teachers' continuing education

Though the administrators gave support to the concept of teacher-to-student ministry and were eager to see its results in their students, their responses generally became less specific and more distant when they were asked what they did to nurture, cultivate, or maintain their teachers for that ministry. No administrator mentioned praying for his faculty as one would intercede for missionaries on the battle lines of a foreign field. None said that he made an effort to get to know his teachers deeply or set aside time to listen to them. Only one mentioned any kind of personal action on his part to build up the individual teacher (the writing of thank-you notes). None seemed to think in terms of the correlative questions that should arise from an emphasis on teacher-to-student ministry: what does the individual teacher need to be in order to fulfill that ministry, and how can administration and the school structure help him to understand and become that?

In the area of how the goals of teacher-to-student ministry influence his school's hiring practices, no administrator said that Bible training was a hiring requirement; it was mentioned as a plus or an extra. Nor was there any requirement of training in basic Christian psychology. At best the administrators seemed to feel that such things as the ACSI teacher certification requirements of CEUs in Bible and professional training would satisfy those needs. Though some of the schools did prefer to hire graduates of Christian or Bible colleges, the general opinion seemed to be that a profession of faith, references speaking of one's Christian character, the signing of doctrinal and philosophy statements, and involvement in one's church were sufficient indications of spiritual preparation for teacher-to-student ministry, and that nothing more could be required to any practical degree.

The Evident Potential

Admittedly, an endeavor that is essentially spiritual cannot be completely quantified or accurately predicted even though many of its supporting segments may be somewhat controllable and a number of its results may be visible. Such is the Christian high school. Granted, not all the students will be believers, and a considerable number of believing students may not have progressed even to the point of desiring to grow in Christ simply because of their youth and level of understanding or because of the absence of other supporting factors. However, though the current status of teacher-to-student ministry may not be all that it should be, still most students, parents, teachers, and administrators are positive, or at least neutral, toward that ministry. Therefore, the door is wide open, and because of that fact it is possible to imagine some of the potential for ministry within the Christian high school simply by noting several other factors that are already in place.

Growth and Acceptance

The last 50 years have seen mushrooming growth of what might be called the evangelical Christian school. Before that point, most Christian schools were denominational—Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic, Episcopal, Mennonite. Since then, however, and for various reasons, independent Christian schools have sprung up, as have schools related to other types of churches but which have not been part of over-all denominational educational systems. The existence of these newer Christian schools has been encouraged by movements such as the Association of Christian Schools International and by regional groups such as Mid-Atlantic Christian School Association. ACSI is a centralized organization for professional nurturing and mutual contact and

activities for evangelical Christian schools, and it has also become a respected, international accrediting agency which helps schools maintain careful organizational and academic standards while allowing for individual school distinctives. Many Christian schools are also earning accreditation by regional or state agencies that require that they meet personnel and academic standards. It is not difficult these days to find Christian high schools holding some of the same so-called secular credentials as non-Christian schools in addition to ACSI accreditation. These Christian schools often can boast higher standardized test scores than public schools and equal or better teacher qualifications. On today's academic scene Christian high schools are generally accepted and respected. This is accompanied by patron satisfaction with the well-rounded programs that they offer. The Lord has positioned Christian high schools as legitimate and unrestricted sources of ministry within American society

Financial and Material Resources

While most Christian high schools depend on tuition payments for the bulk of their funds, many have undertaken varied and successful fund-raising methods or have received grants and endowments that make finances, and even student financial aid, manageable. Some schools are linked to sponsoring, supporting churches. Others have benefactors who offer student scholarships and generally support the school through giving. In the State of Pennsylvania, private schools can receive sizeable state money allowances for the purchase of textbooks. Overall, ways to finance the Christian school today are not impossible to achieve.

The Lord has provided buildings, classrooms, furniture, and equipment for these schools. Some schools have amazing material resources, others have less or are still growing, but it is clear that the Lord has provided locations for these schools that are more than adequate and certainly nothing to complain about or for which to offer apology.

Personnel Standards

The caliber of teachers in the Christian high school has reached a point of respectability that equals or exceeds those in the public school. Under ACSI accrediting guidelines full time teachers must have a bachelor's degree plus teacher training, along with the goal that all should be teaching in the area of their major. ACSI accreditation also requires ongoing acquisition of CEUs in Bible and professional development until advanced degrees and levels of training are reached in both areas, qualifying the teacher for lifetime professional certification. Most of the teachers in Christian high schools work for markedly lower wages than their public school counterparts, but the majority would say that the dimensions of Christian ministry, atmosphere, and goals more than compensate for the wage levels.

The Lord has provided trained, credentialed teaching and administrative personnel for the evangelical Christian high school. Though these teachers may not receive the same attention as secular educators, they believe in their sacrificial ministry and see the importance of the opportunity to educate with eternity in view.

Time with Students

One of the most convincing factors demonstrating the Lord's blessing and vision for the Christian high school is the amount of time that it has with its students. Overshadowing the home and church, the school has at least an average of 30 hours per week with each student, not counting extra-curricular activity time. No church can claim this much time for input, regardless of the extent of its youth ministry. Most families have only a fraction of this amount of contact, and family time is often not structured to hold the serious attention of the teenager. The multi-faceted activities of a school allow for numerous settings of influence and varying degrees of formality that facilitate useful levels of sharing and teaching. With the increasing disintegration of families, the Christian high school may often, perhaps unexpectedly, find itself being a stand-in for parent role models or even being a haven from troublesome situations that the student faces. It is easy to see that the possibilities and responsibility of ministry are tremendous for the Christian high school that views itself as the Lord's instrument beyond academics in the students' lives.

In short, the Christian high school has a huge opportunity of time to teach, model, disciple, and generally facilitate the biblical maturing of believing Christian teenagers that no other element in their lives can offer. The Lord has established an unparalleled set of circumstances in which the Christian high school can be a major, life-long influence as the students learn biblical patterns and come to understand the ramifications of the Gospel in their lives and their worlds.

Freedom

An obvious but extremely important observation is that the Lord has placed the American Christian high school within a society that allows it the freedom to operate, to teach with redemption as its basis and regeneration as its goal, and to communicate truth biblically. Far from taking this for granted, the Christian high school should, instead, feel an impetus to use this freedom, while it is available, to the fullest extent possible.

Potential as an Impetus

On one hand is the clear and overriding biblical mandate for adult believers to communicate God, His Word and the implications of redemption to younger believers. On the other hand is a more-than-adequate situation of time, resources and personnel through which this mandate can be fulfilled extremely well. Most importantly, those involved in the Christian high school community are at least accepting of the idea of teacher-to-student ministry, and the majority definitely desire it, even though it may not yet have been understood or developed to its potential. The Lord's provisions and intentions seem clear. Why, then, do Christian high schools often seem to become primarily refuges from the secular or simply nice places to do nice things with nice people? Why is customer satisfaction often a school's driving force rather than an unashamed allegiance to the Gospel? Why do we not see more Christian school graduates who demonstrate a relationship with Christ that is so central to their thinking and being that they simply and sincerely want nothing more than to serve Him? To some extent, the current views of students, parents, teachers, and administrators reflect a lack of focus and necessary priorities, but that probably results from a lack of careful

definition of the school's ministry and of the biblical concepts at its foundation. With those items clarified, an examination of the roles of the educators involved in teacher-to-student ministry will also help to define basic issues and to shape changes that can improve its fulfillment.

Since the Lord has arranged a setting that is second to none, and since the ministry need exists in the Body of Christ and in the hearts of the Christian high school students, it remains only for the leadership adults—specifically the teachers supported by their administrators—to understand and act upon the biblical mandate of teacher-to-student ministry as it relates to both the conduct of the work itself and to their personal, ongoing qualifications and roles.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLES OF EDUCATORS RESPONSIBLE FOR TEACHER-TO-STUDENT MINISTRY

In his book, *Kingdom Education*, Glen Schultz makes the simple but encompassing comment, “Christian adults play a very important role in God’s plan for educating future generations. . . .The most important factor in the development of a young person’s world view is the influence of his teachers.”¹

The Role of the Teacher

To describe the classroom teacher in a Christian high school is to add much depth and several dimensions to what should intrinsically be seen as a highly demanding and extremely influential vocation. It is to change earthbound accomplishments into eternal instrumentality. It is to transform a career into a calling. “Christian school educators are at the heart of the redemptive work of the Christian school. This ministry requires consistent modeling, mastery of content, skilled instruction, wise counseling, a servant heart, and God’s calling on each teacher’s life.”² The classroom teacher is in the front-line position of ministry in many young believers’ lives. The teacher’s purpose is to facilitate the molding of students as they become adults who are genuinely committed to

¹ Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education* (Nashville: LifeWay Books, 1998), 47.

² Milton Uecker, “Your Calling as a Teacher,” *Christian School Education*, Vol. 1, Num 1, 2002-2003, 8.

Jesus Christ and who are mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually conformed to scripture. This definition should outline the central goals of the Christian teacher.

The Teacher as an Instructor

If the Christian teacher views his work as ministry and his position as calling, then his performance of those things is his stewardship and offering to the Lord whom he serves and should be of the highest quality. The teacher must be well-versed and up-to-date in academics and methodology. He should enjoy being a lifetime student and should communicate that enjoyment to his students. All the elements of fairness, clarity, control, encouragement, and opportunity should be seen in the Christian teacher's classroom. A demanding addiction to perfection is not the goal; rather, a godly pursuit of excellence should be a genuine, daily habit.

Since the formative impact of a teacher upon his students cannot be over-estimated, excellence must also extend to his biblical knowledge and his ability to instruct students from that basis. Even his academic and pedagogical abilities cannot be optimally present unless his mind and work are structured and saturated by Scripture. This standard is not reduced simply because the teacher's academic major may be something other than Bible. The Christian teacher must be dually trained. He must be exemplary in academics, but also capable and trained in communicating biblical content and concept. Failure to possess thoroughness and excellence in his biblical training and preparation is to contribute to a disintegration of the Christian school's reason for being. Though perhaps unintentional, it becomes more than a philosophical contradiction; it is a contradiction of purpose. If the Christian school claims to offer biblical role models who

can verbalize and model biblical conduct and lifestyles as well as instruct biblically, then the classroom teacher, regardless of academic major, must also be one who “correctly handles the word of truth.”³ To be weak in biblical preparation is a serious failing and cannot avoid diluting or even undermining the ministry impact of the Christian high school.

The Teacher as a Model

Jesus said, “. . . everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”⁴ The Apostle Paul, having lived out the Gospel and served his Lord with deep commitment and faithfulness, was able to say confidently to the Thessalonians, “You became imitators of us and of the Lord . . . and so you became a model to all the believers . . .”⁵

The teacher’s influence as a model to his students is an unavoidable fact. Rooted in God’s plan for generational interaction and progression, a teacher’s impact will be indelible, regardless of its quality. Every perceivable aspect of the teacher will be magnified and processed by his students simply because of his position as teacher.

Allowing for personality differences and the fact that students will be drawn to different teachers for various reasons, there are still numerous ways in which the modeling of any teacher is particularly observable and therefore influential upon all of his students. Several important areas are his value system; his manner of relating to others, especially to his students; and his life goals. These areas are useful opportunities for

³ 2 Tim. 2:15.

⁴ Lk. 6:40.

⁵ 1 Thess. 1:6,7.

biblical modeling and are therefore areas to be consciously and regularly guarded and checked for ongoing submission to Scripture.

First, the teacher's value system will become evident to his students. They will soon know what motivates and matters to him. They will easily decide whether he is primarily materialistic and has a self-absorbed, here-and-now attitude, or whether his priorities are characterized by seeking "first the Kingdom of God."⁶ Though they themselves may be living selfishly, they will know that that is not a biblical pattern, and they will be disappointed to see it in their teacher. At worst, they may use his failure in this aspect to excuse their own skewed value systems. The teacher who is exemplary in this area will automatically point students beyond themselves to a life that is directed by maintaining a careful, godly definition of what is important.

Second, the teacher will constantly be modeling a pattern of interpersonal relationships. The students will notice whether he serves gladly and genuinely, whether he works for the advancement of others, whether he loves sacrificially, and whether he cares for *them*. Students will not feel obligated to practice what they do not see in their teacher. Conversely, the teacher who reflects Scripture in this area will be able to make inroads into the self-centeredness of the students' age and culture. Students will come to know that when their teacher holds them to high standards, it is because he cares enough to work for their good. Few other areas are more effectively taught by example than this.

Third, as the students come to know their teacher, they will understand his life goals. This area will, in a sense, be the motivation for the first two areas. It is the *why* of what the teacher is. If his life ultimately and genuinely aims at service to Christ, then that goal will dictate all others. Seeing this in their teacher is a powerful lesson for the students.

⁶ Mt. 6:33.

They may not see it in other adults in their worlds. To be the consistent example to the students that he should be, the teacher will need to check his goals carefully and regularly, guarding against complacency or carelessness in his personal fellowship with his Savior.

The elements that make the teacher who he is will automatically be set before his students as a standard, for good or ill. The students will choose to imitate or not, but they will not be unaffected by the exposure. Because of that, the Christian teacher must regard each encounter with a class or with a single student as an opportunity to model biblical truth—truth of character, conduct, and Christ-like response. Saturating one's mind and life with Scripture is the only way to be ready for those hundreds of daily contacts that can point students to that same truth. The principle of overflow is at the heart of the intense, faithful modeling that a Christian teacher should demonstrate.⁷

The Christian teacher's personal, spiritual self-nurturing is the key ingredient in his readiness to fulfill the various dimensions of teacher-to-student ministry. Otherwise, he is essentially unprepared. Such nurturing of the teacher is so crucial that it should also be a central concern to the administration and governing body as they help to arrange the teacher's support system in teacher-to-student ministry. The teacher can only genuinely represent someone or something that saturates his own life. Such saturation will be an example, both consciously and unconsciously, to his students. He will teach best what he knows best.

⁷ Jn. 4:14.

The Teacher as a Mentor

For the Christian teacher, mentoring is a privilege, a relationship that the Lord arranges usually in small group settings or one-on-one. The mentoring relationship between teacher and students is not unlike the Lord's ministry to the believer through the resident Holy Spirit. The mentoring ministry has three primary elements: insight, encouragement, and guidance. It will require investments of attention, time, availability, and especially prayer.

The mentor's insight will be a result of several things. First, it will rest on a thorough, practical, biblical foundation. The teacher-mentor will ideally be so well versed in Scripture that his own mental grid will process what he sees in his students' lives in such a way that he responds with godly analysis and advice. Second, it will result from an awareness of the student's world. The teacher-mentor will have taken the time and trouble to face and understand that world's philosophies, fads, trend-setters, morals, and habits. He will have learned to recognize warning signs and will evaluate his students according to a biblical anthropology. To step into the world of today's teens enough to hear the thinking and understand the value systems is often unnerving for adults, especially Christian adults. To do so will often reveal desperate need and godless, self-destruction. Not to do so, however, is to shadow box, ignoring the mind-sets that easily form the teens' worldviews. Third, the teacher-mentor will have such an on-going prayer relationship with the Lord that dealing with and working with his students will be an effort genuinely directed by God. The teacher-mentor will learn to be sensitive to the short-term and long-term needs of his students. He will not simply be a friend; he will be a challenger, a pattern, and an intercessor.

The mentor's practice of encouragement of his students will be a product of his vision and concern for them. In order to encourage well, he will have to know the students well. He will also have to know what are worthy, biblical goals toward which to urge them. Again, this will only be possible if the teacher has a balanced, developed, biblical structure of his own. His encouragement will not be dictatorial, but rather will be clear, gentle, and wise. It will be based upon godly love and concern for the students' best interests in terms of eternal goals.

When he has built a relationship of insight and encouragement with the students, the teacher-mentor will have the opportunity to give concrete guidance. He may be asked for advice, or he may be able to give it as suggestion or example. In either case, this is the focus of mentoring young believers. Opportunities for such interaction often come momentarily and without much warning. Therefore, the teacher who desires to be a godly mentor must be prepared by maintaining both his own healthy connection to the Lord as well as his foregoing prayerfulness for the students.

It should be remembered that godly mentoring and guiding is not simply encouraging the young believer to follow his dreams and talents. It is not simply a smiling pat on the back and an inquiry as to how things are going or what he plans to do next semester or after graduation.

When, through various types of contacts, the Lord has established a mentoring relationship between one or a few students and a particular teacher, then mentoring becomes an atmosphere in which the student senses the teacher's genuine care and interest in his spiritual situation. He recognizes the teacher's desire to point him constantly toward the Lord's view of himself, his world, and his life. He comes to expect

the teacher to assist him in learning to think, choose, and act according to a careful, biblical grid. The teacher has not become a dictatorial source of information and direction, but rather a sounding board and assistant, primarily helping the student to build his own biblical, mental grid and to take the early steps in meeting and understanding his Savior in all the daily, practical facets of that fundamental relationship. The mentor's life must also reflect these habits.

The teacher-mentor must see himself as a tool in the student's life whose use God will direct. His ministry to the student will be based upon a love and concern that derives from God's love and concern for that student, never upon a selfish desire for significance or the satisfaction of being needed. A mentoring ministry, done correctly, will be costly in terms of time and surrender of self-centeredness. It may well bring occasions of joy and victory but can also bring heartbreak. Usually mentoring relationships will be temporary, requiring that the teacher-mentor have the grace to let the student grow beyond the teacher's ministry. Hence, the mentor may face emotionally trying times that will deepen his understanding of the privilege and price of ministry.

The teacher-mentor is a source of truth that God can use much more deeply in a student's life than other adults because the student often sees the mentor as someone whom he himself has chosen, not an adult who, for whatever reason, must be part of his life. The Christian teacher-mentor should make it clear, to the student and to himself, that he offers the student essentially Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ, a guideline that in itself sets a basis of truth and delineates the purpose of the mentoring relationship. Obviously the mentoring opportunity holds much potential, and the wise mentor will

prepare for and enter it with constant prayer for the student, for wisdom, and for godliness.

In his book, *Teaching Redemptively*, Donovan Graham includes a very helpful chapter that illustrates the roles of the teacher by looking at biblical facts about the nature of man as well as the roles of Christ who is our prophet, priest, king, and shepherd. Summarizing his perceptions of the teacher as a shepherd, Graham says, “A shepherd knows his sheep well, and with all their individual quirks and quiverings. He is so observant, so compassionate and concerned, and so close to the sheep that he knows their every fear, every move, and every tendency. He cannot tend them well without knowing them well. Is it not the same for the teacher?”⁸ The personal investment by the teacher-mentor of his time, prayer effort, and concern will be considerable, but that is the nature of God-like mentoring. It is not something that should be undertaken without preparation or purpose.

Underlying Patterns for the Teacher’s Role

What is the basis upon which the teacher can become a godly instructor, model, and mentor? What example does the teacher follow in his life to establish such things as godly priorities, the willingness to serve, or a dependence on prayer? The pattern set by Christ answers in two ways: his relationship to his Father and his relationship to his disciples.

Christ’s relationship to his Father outlines the goals for the teacher’s spiritual life and preparation. Christ’s earthly life was characterized by obedience and a totally focused

⁸ Donovan L. Graham, *Teaching Redemptively* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publishers, 2003), 142.

occupation with accomplishing the Father's will. He regarded prayer as crucial. Without reservation he gave himself and his time to those whom the Father had given to him.

From Christ's relationship with his Father flowed his relationship with his disciples, his students. He clearly regarded them as those whom he was preparing to exemplify and spread his truth after he was gone. Because of this he taught them constantly in many ways that Christian teachers can emulate. He spent much time with them. His overriding purpose was to bring them God's truth, knowing that it was "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."⁹ He taught by word and example and in a variety of settings. He prayed for them personally and loved them sacrificially. He challenged them beyond their own plans and dreams to the higher calling of his own purposes.

Each one of these practices and goals should be the goals of the Christian teacher, even though he may not be able to fulfill them to perfection. They are his pattern; they proscribe the work of the Christian teacher. The degree of their achievement within the teacher's human limitations will pivot upon his reliance on and careful obedience to his heavenly Father.

In his recent and very insightful book, *Piety and Philosophy*, in which he probes the legitimacy and intent of education that is Christian, Richard Riesen discusses the influence of the Christian teacher and a number of characteristics of the teacher/mentor.

Not least among the ways students are drawn to Christ in Christian schools is the influence of Christian teachers. Their acumen, their love, their joy, their Christian winsomeness: these are all forms of Christian witness that must not be underestimated. . . . That then is the spiritual influence of a good teacher, whose kindly spirit, self-effacing humility and Christian joy, not least his ability clearly to give reasons for the

⁹ 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

hope that is within him, bear winsome witness to genuine faith, and is one of the means not strictly academic by which students are drawn to Christ.¹⁰

When students are exposed to teachers who not only are relating to their heavenly Father as they should, but who also relate to their students with the same truth and goals that Christ conveyed to His disciples, beneficial mentoring will happen consciously and unconsciously. The personal challenge to the teacher is simple, yet encompassing. Is he ready to understand, allow, and work toward that degree of personal, spiritual formation that will making him increasingly useful in his students' lives?

The Role of the Administrator

As the teacher's role of daily student contact is central to the work of teacher-to-student ministry, so the administrator's role is crucial in setting the stage and supplying support for that ministry. His role includes four important facets. First, he is the one who sets the spiritual pace and depth of the school. Second, by decision and example he defines the school's priorities. Third, he is pivotal in developing the interpersonal atmosphere of the school. Fourth, he is the key support and nurturing person for the teachers in their teacher-to-student ministry.

Much of the literature and training designed for school administrators, secular or Christian, revolves around the idea of leadership, and rightly so. However, for the Christian school administrator two other dimensions should be considered: ministry supporter and Christ-like servant. Perhaps more than the teacher with his students, the administrator with his faculty should mirror the relationship that Christ had with his disciples and with those to whom He ministered. As with the teacher, the administrator's

¹⁰ Richard A. Riesen, *Piety and Philosophy* (Phoenix: ACW Press, 2002), 126-127.

life should exemplify the relationship of obedience that Christ had with His Father, as well as His focus upon accomplishing His Father's will and bringing Him glory. Nothing ultimately has greater effect on the school's spiritual condition than the spiritual life and example of the administrator. As the front office goes, so goes the school.

Evelyn Huling, an experienced teacher and principal, describes the spiritual nature and responsibility of the Christian administrator. "The school administrator position is one of entrusted leadership. It is a calling, and in that calling, each leader has a mission to fulfill, a responsibility to the people being served, and a daily accounting to the Lord. [Administrators] are an extension of Christ . . . to model the values that grow out of the immeasurable love of Christ. We are to 'act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly' with our God (Micah 6:8)."¹¹

The Administrator as the Spiritual Pacesetter

If the students naturally look to the teacher for an example, then the teachers also look to the administrator, not necessarily to discover for the first time what they themselves should be spiritually, but to see that pattern in action. Seeing faithfulness, Christ-likeness, and growth in their administrator serves as a statement to the teachers that such is possible in any number of situations. It also assures them that spiritual matters are at the very core of their school and thus gives them the moorings they need to accomplish their front-line ministry. As he displays patience, concern, and prayerfulness, the administrator's example will consciously and unconsciously tell the teachers what they need to be. He should not have to plead for seriousness about spiritual matters or growth;

¹¹ Evelyn Sherwood Huling, "The Administrator as Builder," *Christian School Education*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, 2002-2003, 25-27.

the teachers should desire what they see in him. Just as the teacher functions like a wise and caring shepherd of his students, the administrator has the opportunity and calling to be that to his faculty. Teachers may often face a battle for the hearts and spiritual formation of their students, but, having chosen to follow God's call to the Christian school, they will be a willing follower of a godly administrator.

The Administrator as the Definer of Priorities

Regardless of the school's philosophy, mission statement, core values, or vision statement, in reality the administrator, often wordlessly, sets the priorities of the school. The teachers, students, and parents will know what is really important in the school by watching him. What area of the school's activities receives his attention most? Is it obvious that people are his greatest concern? Is he able to be a servant, or is he only a big-picture person who uses leadership to isolate himself?

Both the school's emphasis and attitude will be defined by its administrator. He will shape the school's atmosphere by his own value system. Students and faculty will be quick to sense whether, for example, the students or the fund-raisers matter more.

The structure of most Christian schools places the administrator in the most visible, most responsible position. It would be hoped that he is a person who demonstrates the spiritual gifts suitable to his duties and that he pursues the spiritual maturity necessary to his position in the Body of Christ. Because of his overriding influence, it is crucial that the administrator be a person who is saturated with Scripture so his decisions are God-pleasing, his attitude humble, and his outreach Christ-like. He, of all people in the

school, cannot afford to be sloppy or unprepared in his biblical knowledge. He cannot afford to “serve two masters”¹² or to forget the overall gravity of his role.

The Administrator as Developer of Interpersonal Atmosphere

Though the administrator’s example impacts the whole school community, it has its greatest effect between administrator and faculty members. Because they set the tenor of so much in the school, administrator-faculty relationships can greatly encourage or greatly hinder teacher-to-student ministry. The teachers will be urged on in their work if they know the administrator genuinely has a heart for that ministry. They will be encouraged to grow and do their best in all areas if they know they have the concern, care, and confidence of their administrator. Ellen Lowrie Black notes that

relationships and personal connections enable leaders to tap into the dreams, hopes, and skills of their team members. In doing so, they build trust. A leader must sense the mood and morale of the team. . . . Mutual respect, shared vision, and friendship exist only where there is connection. . . . Before attempting anything else, leaders should build bridges needed for good relationships. They may begin by openly asking team members for input or even forgiveness for a lack of sensitivity.¹³

An administrator who is gifted in dealing with big-picture issues may find it difficult to connect on a personal level with his teachers. However, the establishment of personal contact was always part of Christ’s ministry to others and in the training of his disciples. Since the lack of personal connection between faculty and administration can be a breeding ground for misunderstanding and loss of unified purpose, the observation of Hans Fung, an experienced pastor and school administrator, is fitting. “We need to put more effort into developing strong and genuine relationships among faculty members and

¹² Lk. 16:13.

¹³ Ellen Lowrie Black, “Intangible Leadership Qualities,” *Christian School Education*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, 2002-2003, 18.

administrators in our schools. We have the great privilege of building the next generation of strong disciples of Jesus Christ by setting examples of genuine care and respect for one another and of open communication with one another. Our humble attitude of servanthood will leave a lasting impression on all those we encounter in our ministry.”¹⁴ Nothing will be more defeating to a Christian teacher than to feel isolated and, therefore, uninvolved or unimportant in the school’s ministry. Unfortunately, few things will happen more quickly than that alienation if the administrator does not take the initiative to build caring connections with each of his teachers. Relationship is basic to his shepherding of his faculty. To fail to establish it is to jeopardize greatly the possibility of developing a faculty who can minister deeply to its students.

The Administrator as Supporter of Teacher-to-Student Ministry

If the work of teacher-to-student ministry is one of the functions of the Body of Christ in its fulfillment of the biblical mandate to “make disciples,”¹⁵ then the classroom teacher in the Christian school is in a position similar to any missionary who is teaching the Gospel. The New Testament illustrates many times that such missionaries need a support system within the Body, not just for material requirements, but for encouragement and prayer. In the Christian school, the administrator is in a position to spearhead the support network of the classroom teacher. Besides building a personal relationship with the teacher, he should keep abreast of the teacher’s work, difficulties, and needs. He should be the one to rally support, spiritual and otherwise, from other faculty, from parents, and from board members, especially in the area of prayer. If the administrator is convinced

¹⁴ Hans Fung, “Relational Competence,” *Christian School Education*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, 2002-2003, 32-33.

¹⁵ Mt. 28:19.

of the effectiveness and, therefore, the necessity of prayer, he will make that his primary means of supporting his teachers. Prayer should become a strong, central connection between administrator and teacher. It is not an option and cannot be casual or occasional. It cannot be relegated only to brief, morning devotions at the beginning of the school day. This should be intercessory prayer. It is just as crucial as prayer for missionaries on the foreign field and cannot be over-emphasized.

The administrator who shepherds his faculty well will view them as God's instruments to "feed my lambs."¹⁶ Therefore, their encouragement and spiritual maintenance will be his primary concern. All their academic duties and accomplishments are part of serving God's purpose of producing disciples who are molded for His purposes in the world. Thus it is the administrator's duty and privilege to support, guide wisely, and stand with his teachers as "workers together with Him."¹⁷ Translating the concepts of encouragement and support into practicality, Black lists ten suggestions for administrators to remember as they lead and serve.

Be visible and available.
 Listen to your people.
 Take the time to nurture relationship.
 Look for ways to position others according to their gifts and passions.
 Encourage those around you to take chances.
 Reward those who do.
 Learn from mistakes and don't repeat them.
 Say thank-you often.
 Schedule celebrations.
 Keep moving forward.¹⁸

¹⁶ Jn. 21:15.

¹⁷ 2 Cor. 6:1 KJV (King James Version).

¹⁸ Black, 19.

The Role of the Governing Body

Dr. Roy W. Lowrie, Jr., a pioneer in the establishment of the evangelical Christian school, states, “The general quality of the school depends heavily upon the quality of its board . . .”¹⁹ The board and its decisions are very much at the heart of a school’s initial vision and of what it becomes.

Unfortunately, for many in the school community, the governing body or board is often perceived as being a remote, perhaps faceless group whose exact functions are vague at best. Teachers may feel that board members are far removed from the realities of daily school life, but still wield decision-making power that shapes the teachers’ world. Administrators may feel they are being pressured or micro-managed by the board. Students may be generally unaware of its presence or significance. Such a state of affairs will be unnecessary if the Christian school board has been organized and enabled to be a vital contributor to the school’s purpose and heart beat.

The composition of the school board will vary from school to school; some will consist exclusively of school parents while others may include community businessmen or representatives from a sponsoring church. Regardless of the reasons for their inclusion on the board, all members should qualify on two crucial points: first, they must be spiritually mature believers, dedicated to a pursuit of Jesus Christ, of Scripture, and of prayer; second, they must clearly understand and without reservation support the mission statement of the school. Scripture and the school’s mission statement, the latter being based upon the former, will be the two mental grids that guide the effective board in its policy-making and decisions. Pointing to the need for comprehensive spiritual maturity

¹⁹ Roy W. Lowrie, Jr., *Serving God on the Christian School Board* (Western Association of Christian Schools and National Christian School Education Association, 1976), 13.

among board members, Dr. Lowrie notes, “The school is a spiritual enterprise, not a business venture. As the board charts the course of the school, it must seek, and it must find, the Lord’s will at every point. This requires an understanding of biblical principles, the ability to pray through a matter to the proper decision, and the faith to believe God for all things.”²⁰

The board is given the task of setting the course for the school based upon its vision and mission statements. When policy is decided, based upon these, the accomplishment of that policy is handed over to the administrative personnel and the faculty. Hence the selection of administrative and teaching personnel is one of the board’s most important functions. These are massively important decisions. Thus, the selection of board members should never be made simply on the basis of relationship or one’s ability to give financially to the school. The godly character of a board candidate is much more important than his business position or longevity of connection with the school.

Board members must understand the school’s vision and mission thoroughly so they may adjust policy to meet the kaleidoscope of daily school life without destroying the school’s reasons for being. Their understanding of the school’s reason for being must include a commitment to teacher-to-student ministry that ought to be clearly included in its mission statement. Therefore, as with the teachers and administrators, the board members must necessarily understand what that ministry is and what should be structured into school policy and practices in order to facilitate it. This will affect their policies regarding students as well as teachers, as the board regularly asks itself how it can nurture that ministry through its decisions. The board will need to have a passion for teacher-to-student ministry as the heart of the school’s calling.

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

Though time and schedules are understandable factors, board members are in a position to be influential, visible examples of godly leadership for the school community if they can be included in such activities as chapels, fund raisers, school programs, or informational seminars. They can be spokespeople for the school and its mission. They can provide liaison with the community or with churches. They can give testimonies in student chapel services, thereby taking on real-life significance for the students. They can articulate to parents, students, and inquirers the reasons and philosophies of education that is Christian. They can be ambassadors and cheerleaders for the school, always regarding such involvement as an opportunity to further the Lord's work in and through the school.

The role of the governing body of the Christian high school is foundational in many ways. Such a role is best fulfilled by humble, insightful, involved members of the school community who are willing to serve, to maintain their own spiritual health, and to invest their time and prayers in the school.

The issues and challenges that confront Christian schools are becoming more numerous and complex. If the Christian school board member is to guide and perpetuate the mission of the school, he or she should consider the Apostle Paul's question: "And who is equal to such a task?" (2 Corinthians 2:16b, NIV) and his answer: "Our competence comes from God" (2 Corinthians 3:5b, NIV). Christian schools want to produce world-changers. They want their students to impact the world for Christ's kingdom. That is the ultimate mission of every Christian school. Members of the Christian school board are uniquely positioned to guide and perpetuate that most worthy mission.²¹

The Synergistic Roles

While many statements and many guidelines can necessarily be made to define education that is Christian and the roles of the adult educators involved, still they can be

²¹ David Roth, "The Number One Role," *Christian School Education*, Vol. 3, Issue 5, 1999-2000

summed up simply as the “Bible-based, Christ-centered process of leading a child to Christ, building a child up in Christ, and equipping a child to serve Christ.”²² To accomplish this, the three groups of adult educators must understand both their distinct roles and their shared roles.

As has been seen, each group has specific duties. Primarily the classroom teacher is the student-contact person, the front-line worker through teacher-to-student ministry. The administrator is the teacher’s supporter and facilitator. While he leads, he also serves, encourages, listens, and provides material, emotional, and spiritual support. The school board members provide structure and policy within which the teachers and administrator may accomplish their work and ministry, guarding and implementing the school’s mission by maintaining biblical guidelines and choosing personnel who share the school’s heart for ministry. None of these three groups can function without personally maintaining a genuine devotion to Jesus Christ, to Scripture, and to prayer. Similarly, their school will not survive spiritually if they are personally lax in their spiritual formation. Though these are distinctly personal responsibilities, they all dovetail into the accomplishment of the school’s purposes.

The obvious need for shared roles derives from the groups’ common purpose of accomplishing the mission of the school. Shared roles should exist among the three groups and should present a unified leadership and example to the students. The healthy Christian school will have practices that bind the three groups together; isolation cannot occur among the groups without damaging the work of the school. Just as the board must never micro-manage administration, so they both will cultivate a relationship of genuine trust, respect, honesty and accountability. If a sponsoring church is involved, then

²² Schultz, 25.

representatives of its leadership will also be included in this relationship. The administration will not hesitate to bring issues to the board for its input, and the board will not establish policy without administrative input. A habit of shared, unifying communication should exist between the groups.

The administrator will grant the freedom that empowers and nurtures his teachers toward using their talents and reaching their potential. He will be a clear communicator between faculty and board. Again, isolation must not be allowed between administration and the faculty.

The most enabling and binding roles among the three groups of educators should be their prayer, sharing, and encouragement of each other. Dr. Lowrie comments, “Prayer keeps . . . relationship harmonious, a fact of great value in the school. Daily dependence upon God, expressed through prayer, honors Him and keeps Christ preeminent.”²³ Means of regularly bringing all three groups together should be considered in order to build the strength of unity that can be found in their Christian fellowship. It is humanly all too easy to diverge from clear mission when no aggressive effort exists to keep and build the unity that can come from contact and face-to-face sharing. Many schools probably fail in this area simply because schedules seem impossible, but efforts to unite the three groups of educating adults more practically would pay dividends in loyalty, satisfaction, and dedication to the ministry.

Ken Smitherman, president of ACSI, observes that “Christian schooling, then, must be the product of design, taking its shape through the diligence of educators who are seeking God’s direction in how to ‘train a child in the way he should go’ (Proverbs 22:6). It must not be a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. The authentic

²³ Lowrie, *Serving God on the Christian School Board*, 22.

Christian classroom . . . entails committed Christian school leaders and Christian school teachers partnering to achieve the goal that has been set before them.”²⁴

²⁴ Ken Smitherman, “The Authentic Christian Classroom,” *Christian School Education*, Vol. VI, Num. 3, 2002-2003, 4.

CHAPTER 4

PROPOSALS FOR DESCRIBING AND NURTURING EDUCATORS WHO FULFILL TEACHER-TO-STUDENT MINISTRY

Several factors and components of teacher-to-student ministry within the Christian high school have been clarified in this project. The ministry itself has been defined as a legitimate function of the Body of Christ in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Its mandate is clear according to the biblical pattern of inter-generational transmission of truth and instruction in godliness. The God-given growth of the Christian school movement in the last fifty years has brought it to a position of solid, academic credibility and substantial extra-curricular development. Everyone involved in the Christian high school—students, parents, teachers, administrators—overwhelmingly agree that teacher-to-student ministry is or should be an important aspect of the Christian high school, though many realize that its centrality and fulfillment need attention and revitalization. Finally, the roles of adult educators involved in the Christian high school have been defined, with special emphasis given to the front-line, classroom teacher.

Since the revitalization of teacher-to-student ministry as the central distinctive of the evangelical Christian school is primarily rooted *inside* the Christian teacher, and since his nurturing must be provided by the structures and practices of the school, the two original questions of the project still stand. What must the Christian teacher *be* in order to fulfill

his role and this ministry? What must the Christian school *do* to nurture the teacher in understanding and fulfilling this calling?

Describing the Ministering Teacher

Delving deeply to define the Christian teacher beyond his roles is reflective of Christ's habit of speaking to the heart of an issue as he did with the Samaritan woman.¹ Though of course it is possible for a teacher to play a role to a degree, his work will be much more usable to the Lord if it springs from a genuine source. Christ described this source, saying, "the water *I* give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."² To define the ministering teacher, two aspects will be considered: what he must *be* and what he must *know*. That is, the ministering teacher must be spiritually prepared and conceptually prepared.

What the Ministering Teacher Must Be

Realizing the crucial nature of what a teacher *is* inwardly, Donovan Graham observes, ". . . the Scriptures do give us some descriptions of what a person filled with the Holy Spirit and wedded to Christ should be like. Again, if those characteristics are to exist in all believers, they certainly should exist in teachers because we are some of the students' most visible role models for Christian living."³ What should be true of the teacher's heart and mind that will make him most usable in teacher-to-student ministry?

¹ Jn. 4:4-42.

² Jn. 4:14.

³ Graham, 127.

Unreserved Commitment to Christ

First, beyond his salvation experience, the teacher's mind-set should be one of unquestioning submission to Jesus Christ. This must be his overriding directive and motivation, and it should control the smallest detail. The Apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians should not be an overstatement for the Christian teacher: ". . . and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."⁴ As a "new creation"⁵ in Christ, the teacher's life should give evidence of being "transformed by the renewing of [his] mind."⁶ It should also be evident that living as a transformed person is so important to the teacher that he pursues the disciplines that help him maintain that position.

Unreserved Commitment to Scripture

Second, and closely related to a transformed mind-set, will be the teacher's commitment to Scripture. His life will be bounded by the Word. He will love it; he will, like Luther, be its captive. Knowing Scripture will be his delight, his occupation, his obsession. He will recognize it as his lifeline for direction, comfort, and insight. It will not be one of several authorities; it will stand alone in that position. The teacher will eagerly pursue its study at every opportunity, and this exposure will naturally become the most noticeable influence in his life. Without a complete, knowledgeable commitment to Scripture, the teacher's profession will be hollow and his ministry incomplete.

⁴ 2 Cor. 10:5.

⁵ 2 Cor. 5:17.

⁶ Rom. 12:2.

Unlimited Representation of Christ

Third, through his submission to Christ and his saturation with Scripture, the Christian teacher will become a reflection and representative of his Savior. He will be able to mentor with compassion and love. He will be able to guide with wisdom and insight. He will be glad and ready “to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”⁷

Endless ramifications of submission and saturation could be listed. The overall conclusion for the Christian teacher is to realize that if he is indeed eager to minister to his students as deeply as possible, he cannot avoid pursuing these things in his own spiritual life. These three elements are at the root of the teacher’s ministry just as Christ’s obedience to his Father was at the heart of his. They form the irreducible essence of the teacher’s ministry. They may seem to compose too simple a basis, but any notion of their inadequacy can be dismissed by a reminder of whom and what they represent.

What the Ministering Teacher Must Know

Complementary to and shaped by what the ministering teacher *is* will be a number of important areas that he must *know*. He will understand them through his mental grid of Scripture, and they will shape his ministry to his students by adding insight to his ability to guide biblically. Six crucial areas will be discussed: biblical anthropology as it relates to both student and teacher, how and why to keep a current understanding of the youth culture, the importance of familiarity with Christian psychology, progressive aspects of

⁷ 1 Pet. 3:15.

the mentoring process, awareness of areas in which teens struggle, and the relevance of prayer to teacher-to-student ministry.

A Biblical Anthropology

Today's popular views of human nature seem to be almost the opposite of Scripture's teachings. The failures seen in education in general can, to a large extent, be traced to unbiblical beliefs, especially regarding the nature of the student. Unfortunately, some of the concepts sound so good that even believers have accepted them, thus demonstrating what can happen when one's mind and life-view are not carefully directed by Scripture.

An example of this is the idea that, at all costs, the student must be helped to feel good about himself, i.e., develop high self-esteem. Though it is often accompanied by provisos that are designed to imply God's involvement, such a notion blatantly contradicts the whole redemptive action of God and builds a habit of self-centeredness. Scripture gives no intrinsic reasons to feel good about one's self, but there are limitless reasons to be thankful for and to enjoy God's creative and redeeming mercies in one's life. Such subtle but central differences can be detected if one has a mind that is saturated with Scripture.

Richard Riesen relates an example of careless theology on this particular point.

I clearly remember the message of an alleged expert in Christian education whom someone had invited to my school to talk to my teachers. It is more important that your students learn self-esteem in the classroom, she said, than it is that they learn English. . . . She apparently had never thought very much about a theology of self-esteem itself. If she had, she would have realized that there is little or no biblical support for the idea. The message of Scripture drives entirely in the opposite direction: lose your life, take up your cross, humble yourself. . . . Yet many Christian schools are deeply influenced by the doctrine of self-esteem . . . in part, one imagines, because like other popular nostrums, it was accepted without being required to undergo Christian scrutiny.⁸

⁸ Riesen, 87-88.

The thought of today does not see the students, as well as all humans, as fallen creatures, lost, without hope, and in need of divine intervention, redemption, and regeneration. Rather, it views man as either a product of environment and genetics or as an individual who can set his own course and educate himself out of his errors. The Christian school, in attempting to base its ministry upon a biblical view of man, will have to examine its basic assumptions and then consider the ramifications that may bring necessary changes within its goals and practices.

In educational circles it is usually unacceptable to deal with the heart. Problems may be labeled, and surface behavior may be curbed by rules, medication, or punishment. However, no satisfactory remedy is offered for the dismal behavior and attitudes because there is no governing framework of truth that is able to change the human heart.

The Christian school and the prepared Christian teacher, knowledgeable in Scripture, will have the necessary truth upon which to build real solutions. However, many are not really clear in their understanding of exactly what their students are. Many unwittingly follow the thought of the day and believe that their students are essentially good, that they make mistakes once in a while, but are not really hopeless or lost. Such perceptions may describe the students' outward behavior, but it does not describe their heart. The ministering teacher must always remember, without condemnation, that each student has a heart that is "deceitful above all things and beyond cure."⁹ This biblical perspective will keep the teacher from being shocked or repelled by student behavior and need, and it will elicit a Christ-like compassion and desire to demonstrate the Gospel to his students, both saved and unsaved. Unless the teacher has a clear, biblical anthropology as he

⁹ Jer. 17:9.

views his students, he will waste much time and effort by either distancing himself from the problems or by trying to apply the wrong cures

Donovan Graham has summarized a biblical view of man's fallen state. It supplies a clear reference point, especially for dealing with unsaved students.

We human beings in our fallen state are the following:

Perverted, not eliminated. All the created attributes of humankind were distorted and misdirected at the fall. They did not disappear and make us something other than human. We still bear the image of God, though that image is perverted in every dimension.

Idolatrous. We exchanged the truth of God for a lie, but we continue to be creatures of faith, believing in and acting on whatever we choose to believe is true.

Estranged. Because of our sin, we are separated from God, others, and ourselves, not adequately knowing any of the three or how to respond appropriately.

Seeking security. Cut off from the true source of security, we seek it not only in the idols we create but also in ourselves and our performance.

Self-referenced. Having denied God as the authority and reference point for all of life, we use ourselves for both, usurping God's place.

Unable to solve the problem ourselves. We cannot undo the effects of the fall and remove ourselves from God's judgment through our own efforts. It takes an act of God to bring healing and the possibility of righteousness.¹⁰

Having understood this, the Christian teacher knows where to begin his ministry.

Prayerfully relying on the working of the Holy Spirit (because neither teacher nor student can solve matters himself), he will faithfully model and speak God's truth to his students. That type of ministry will be a testimony to the unsaved and an encouraging example to the saved. Keeping the biblical view of man in mind, the teacher will also be freed from a false sense of responsibility or guilt regarding the students' responses. God is in charge of results, and the students are responsible to him.

¹⁰ Graham, 107-108.

Graham also summarized the much different situation of the regenerated person. “The process of renewal, though not complete until Christ returns, has begun. Human beings can now have the desire and the power through the Holy Spirit to be what they were created to be and do what God has given them to do.”¹¹

The teacher needs to fit himself into the picture also, being aware of his own hopelessness without redemption and regeneration by God’s grace. Nothing will be more helpful to the teacher in producing the necessary humility for service and ministry than a genuine recognition that his own need and dependence on God are exactly like that of his students.

It must be remembered that few things will cause divergence from effective teacher-to-student ministry more completely than a faulty anthropology. Conversely, nothing will do more to help construct proper goals and practices than an accurate perception of God’s view of students and of one’s self.

An Understanding of Youth Culture

Donavan Graham states that the teacher must function as a shepherd.¹² A shepherd must know what threatens his flock as well as what is good for them. Therefore, the prepared Christian high school teacher will keep abreast of the youth culture—its leaders, its philosophies, its fads and trends, its attitudes and realities, and its value systems. Familiarizing one’s self with the teens’ world may often be difficult, unpleasant, and time-consuming. Nothing, however, could be more helpful if the teacher seriously wants to know what is forming, leading, or threatening his students both within the school and

¹¹ Ibid., 116.

¹² Graham, 140-143.

from without. Before one can reach to the heart of the students' needs, he must understand what they are hearing, processing, and following that may be creating or aggravating their problems. He must literally watch and listen to their world, not shrink from it. There is no room in the Great Commission for avoidance of the world in which the students live simply because it is unfamiliar or uninviting.

Dr. Walt Mueller, founder and president of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, based in Elizabethtown, PA, has been observing and reaching the youth culture for more than thirty years. Communicating through seminars, books, radio, and a number of online resources, the ministry tracks, interprets, and communicates the current youth culture for adults who know they must understand it in order to minister. Internationally influential in both Christian and secular venues, Mueller's ministry offers regular updates for parents, teachers, youth workers, and interested believers who can use his information with their young people.

Mueller's underlying thesis is that Christian adults must observe and listen to the emerging youth cultures and learn to conduct a cross-cultural ministry, bringing them God's truth and trusting him to give results. Noting that the church often feels that "after all, if we don't look at the ugliness, it won't be able to do anything to us and we won't have to do anything about it,"¹³ Mueller points in the direction of youth culture ministry because "the Great Commission applies to the cross-cultural mission field of the emerging postmodern generations. We are called to live out our faith in the postmodern

¹³ Walt Mueller, *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 37.

world as cross-cultural missionaries. We must not only understand the unchanging Word of God but also *those to whom we are called to minister.*” (Italics mine)¹⁴

Any of the materials from Mueller’s ministry through CPYU would be invaluable to the Christian teacher. Much of it could be disturbing, but Mueller is not afraid to investigate all aspects of the current youth culture. These materials and their informed, biblical insights will help the teacher-mentor to be realistically prepared. The teacher needs to make this kind of information a major ingredient in his on-going preparation.

One of Mueller’s central patterns is Paul’s experience in Athens described in Acts 17. Drawing on this, Mueller lists “Core Characteristics for Effective Ministry to the Emerging Generations”

1. Approach youth ministry as a cross-cultural missions venture.
2. Be *in* but not *of* the world.
3. Always evaluate (and where necessary abandon) methods.
4. Answer all the groans.
5. Understand your own cultural biases.
6. Be intent on building relationships.
7. Love without condition or limits.
8. Be willing to suffer “with.”
9. Serve with vulnerable humility.
10. Provide a place and community.
11. Be a learning listener.
12. Be a person of grace.¹⁵

Addressing the patterns and precautions needed in regard to cultural understanding as preparation for a ministry of close mentoring, Mueller advises

We must examine the elements that are particular to students living in our particular time and in our particular ministry setting. . . .[Y]ou’ll walk through the individualized culture that a teen lives in every day. You want to know his or her individual tastes, likes, dislikes, interests, hobbies, gifts, abilities, family situations, values, attitudes, behaviors and allegiances. . . .Wherever you walk, you must engage in the ongoing disciplines of consistent prayer and Bible study. Your cross-cultural missions venture

¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁵ Ibid., 185-194.

will be met by spiritual opposition and challenges. You'll need to pray for God's promised protection. Bible study will keep you sharp and free from error as you put on "the full armor of God" . . . But remember Paul's model. Even though he grew distressed over the spiritual condition of the Athenians, he continued to observe their culture, wanting to learn as much as he could about their way of life.¹⁶

Probably students will be surprised that their teacher cares enough to understand their world, but the pattern set by Christ requires no less, and the results will be eternal.

A Christian Psychology

The results of emotional and interpersonal dynamics come to school every day with high school students. For good or ill, each one is influenced by the psychology of his home and his environment. If, indeed, the Christian teacher is able to recognize the results of whatever the student faces, will he be prepared to understand and respond meaningfully?

For the prepared Christian teacher, a basic knowledge of Christian psychology is an indispensable adjunct to a solid biblical foundation. Scripture gives the reasons for man's brokenness and alienation, and it shows the way to the only solution in Christ. Christian psychology helps supply the information needed to understand specific and intricate personal and interpersonal dynamics; it helps untangle the strands of hurt, wrong choices, fear, and misunderstanding that can be present in high school students. Along with Scripture it can help the Christian teacher lead a struggling student to an understanding of his situation, of his responsibilities, and of the role of redemption. Psychology unrelated to Scripture may be able to identify problems, but it cannot delineate complete answers. It cannot give a student an accurate view of himself and others. Psychology without Scripture is dangerous, but with Scripture as the ultimate authority, it is a necessary tool.

¹⁶ Ibid., 217-218.

With this combination, the teacher can avoid wasted time or misguided effort and can be sure that he is not misleading his student.

Numerous Christian psychology resources exist. Little reason exists for the Christian teacher not to have some basic training in this area. The layman who wants a practical exposure can use materials available from groups such as the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation. Online courses, seminars, books, and video series are available. For those who would like serious lay-counselor training, the programs of the American Association of Christian Counselors are useful. The average Christian teacher may not have university-level training in psychology, but to round out his preparation, he should take advantage of opportunities of general exposure, something that is becoming more and more possible to pursue. The teacher who lacks the basics of Christian psychology will probably feel frustrated in trying to discern student's needs, or he may actively avoid involvement with the students because he realizes he does not have the ability to help them deeply.

A Pattern of the Mentoring Relationship

The role of the Christian teacher as a mentor has been discussed at length in this project because it is at the heart of teacher-to-student ministry. Biblical and spiritual bases have been stressed, and its benefits to the student have been suggested. The ministry of Christ himself is the pattern for the biblical mentor in his relationship to God and to others.

Daniel Egeler, an experienced teacher, coach, and principal, defines the mentoring process as a “relational connection that involves varying levels of involvement and

degrees of intensity with the goal of empowering the protégé.”¹⁷ Speaking of “lifestyle mentoring that will dispense God’s grace while teaching absolute truth,”¹⁸ Egeler draws heavily from *Connecting: the Mentoring Relationship You Need to Succeed in Life* by Paul Stanley and J. Robert Clinton

Stanley and Clinton define mentoring as “a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources.”¹⁹ More specific to the discussion of teacher-to-student ministry is their definition of discipling: “a relational process in which a more experienced follower of Christ shares with a newer believer the commitment, understanding, and basic skills necessary to know and obey Jesus Christ as Lord.”²⁰ How, then, does this process occur within the Christian school setting? What can the teacher expect?

Though each mentoring relationship will be unique because it is tailored by the Holy Spirit and influenced by the individuality of those involved, the progression of the relationship is generally predictable. An understanding of the process is not only descriptive but also instructive, giving the teacher an awareness of what to cultivate in his own life as well as a framework within which to discern what may be developing between him and his students.

First, in various school settings, the teacher’s life-witness and example of wholeness and vitality in Christ will catch the student’s attention. The student will see truth being

¹⁷ Daniel Egeler, “Mentoring: Connecting to the Millennial Generation,” *Christian School Education*, Vol. IV, Num. 1, 2002-2003, 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁹ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992), 38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

consistently lived. The prepared teacher knows that the Lord uses this daily example in the student's mind in answer to his needs for example, growth, and reality. Therefore, the teacher will be especially careful to cultivate his own spiritual stability and usability. This first step is crucial; if the teacher's witness is clouded, it will not have positive attraction. Additionally, the teacher must realize that not every student will be attracted to him. God has uniquely designed him to be used closely in only certain lives. There is no room for pride or dictation on the teacher's part; the Holy Spirit will bring the ones whom He will, and the teacher should pray to that end, accepting and showing love to anyone whom the Lord sends. Again, the pattern of Christ with his disciples demonstrates this relationship and the teacher's responsibility within it: "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me..."²¹

Second, as the student begins to show interest in communicating, the teacher makes himself more available and watches for opportunities to begin building the relationship. Nothing should be or should appear forced; and contact should be casual and relaxed. However, the teacher will wisely begin to pray for the relationship, asking for guidance toward whatever the Lord designs.

Third, when opportunities arise to talk with potential mentorees, the teacher will be ready to give appropriate testimony, sharing experiences or comments that point to the Lord's working in his life. This type of communication is friendly sharing, not obvious instruction. The student feels included in a friendship rather than in a stiff teacher-student relationship. He probably will not realize how much he is learning or that a mentoring

²¹ Jn. 17:6.

relationship is forming. However, without this step of friendly bonding, the student will not find the teacher genuinely approachable.

Fourth, the teacher looks for ways to be aggressively affirming and supportive toward the student. Perhaps he can offer to help the student academically or can allow him to come to the classroom to chat during free time. He can enlist the student's help in responsible ways (errands to the office, help in the classroom) that indicate the teacher's trust or affirmation. The teacher can make sure to attend the extra curricular events in which the student is involved, following up with praise for the student's efforts. In this step the student comes to realize that the teacher genuinely cares for and accepts him.

Fifth, the teacher will begin to see the student take the initiative during their sharing times by mentioning his thoughts, needs, questions, or aspirations. At this point the teacher needs to let the student know that he cares enough to base their relationship and discussions on Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ because they are the only reliable resource, and because the teacher himself regards these most highly. This puts on record the basis of the relationship; it becomes a homing point and a safeguard. It will also make it natural to move into habits of Bible discussion and prayer during the mentoring times, habits that begin to show the student how to handle his own life.

Sixth, some mentoring relationships lend themselves to other activities outside of school. The mentor and student may share an interest in an athletic activity or hobby; this could become a basis for further bonding. The relationship may also continue after high school. These extensions should not be the goal of the relationship, but if the Lord clearly leads, they may be pursued outside of school with the approval of the student's family.

Regardless of the level of the relationship, one indispensable ingredient is the teacher's ability to listen and observe well. This, coupled with his biblical mind-set and his ongoing prayer for the student, will become a pervasive pattern for the life of the relationship. The teacher should practice reflective listening, giving opportunity for the student to learn to process biblically as they talk. The student will always appreciate a caring listener; perhaps he has not found one elsewhere.

In seeking to help his students come to salvation and learn to change and grow in Christ, the mentor must be thoroughly aware of the realities of his involvement in redemptive work. Ministry is Christ working in and through His people to rescue and transform the lives of those around them. If Christ is the pattern, then the mentor can expect to experience the negative aspects of ministry just as Christ did. Reminding believers that such ministry to fellow-sinners can be difficult and costly, Paul Tripp comments:

In personal ministry, the sin of the person you are ministering to will be revealed in your relationship. If you are ministering to an angry person, at some point that anger will be directed at *you*. . . . You might think of it this way: you can't stand next to a puddle without eventually being splashed by the mud! . . . the people we are serving . . . will often sin against us in the same way they sin against others. . . . Personal ministry to suffering sinners will always mean sacrifice and suffering for us . . . Are we willing to die to ourselves to see life in this other person?²²

The mentor's work, done biblically, is an investment of one's life: first, in service to his Savior, and second, in the lives of those he mentors. It is a costly relationship and commitment, not unlike Christ's commitment to man's redemption.

²² Paul David Tripp, *Helping Others Change* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005) Lesson 5, 13.

Areas in Which Students Struggle

The Christian teacher whose ministry is rooted in Scripture and prayer, who is knowledgeable of the youth culture and of the mentoring process, should also familiarize himself with the social situations, current issues, and areas of struggle or addiction that can touch the student's life. The teacher is not a trained, professional counselor, but in his position of front-line ministry, he must be able to recognize the symptoms of these problem areas. He should have a biblical response ready, whether it is verbalized to the student or serves to guide his prayers and mentoring. The teacher must also know what he can do in his position to help the situation, and he must be alert to signs that professional help should be sought.

Having a broadened knowledge of these areas of possible struggle will tremendously extend the teacher-mentor's insight; it may often help him see to the roots of surface problems, even when the student does not perceive or admit to the symptoms or problems. Thus, as the mentor keeps himself informed of what can be a growing and changing list of possible problem areas, he gives himself an extremely helpful tool.

Simply keeping up with media reports will give the Christian teacher clues regarding many areas of teenage struggle. Some areas are true of any generation; some are new phenomena. Fortunately, much information is readily available in laymen's terms for the teacher who lacks formal counseling or psychological training. An excellent source for the Christian teacher is the book, *Helping the Struggling Adolescent*, by Dr. Les Parrott, III. Parrott speaks to the nature of the counselor and the causes of teenagers' struggles. He surveys thirty-six areas in which they may struggle and includes a variety of usable assessment tools.

The following representative areas of struggle are mentioned because of personal experiences in mentoring and observing students in the Christian high school. The areas are grouped as “personal” and “inter-personal” depending upon whether the usual impetus for the problem comes from within the teenager or from the outside world.

Areas of personal struggle

The student may struggle with self-image or significance. To some degree, this pressure affects all young people. Image is increasingly and incessantly held up as the measure of a person’s worth. Popularity rides on it, and few teens really see beyond it. Struggles with self-image may be demonstrated in the young person’s efforts to follow fads or by his habits of negative self-talk. The student may constantly seek attention, or he may begin to withdraw or display signs of related problems such as eating disorders, other addictive habits, or even suicide.

The Christian teacher can watch for any of these signs and point the student toward what God wants him to be rather than what the culture dictates. The teacher can also be the one who offers unconditional acceptance to the student in order to model God’s love. Recognizing God’s love will help the student recover from erroneous views of self. Referral to professional help will be warranted if the student is endangering himself or if he becomes too dependent upon the teacher-mentor.

The student may struggle with substance abuse. Information on this problem is readily available because of its visibility in media and health and social concerns. The teacher can easily learn the symptoms of substance abuse and can be alert to them in his classroom. Again, Scripture’s answer centers on the student’s finding the proper source

for affirmation in accepting God's love and salvation. The teacher may be the one to introduce him to these concepts by word and action. However, because of the physical and legal ramifications of substance abuse, professional help may need to be included early in dealing with some situations. Numerous types of treatment and maintenance programs are available, and the teacher can remain part of the cure by being a friend, an encourager, and a prayer supporter during the process.

The student may struggle with purity issues or pornography. It is difficult to overstate the availability and pervasiveness of this problem. The Christian high school teacher can assume that students involved in pornography sit in his classes each day. Often he can identify them by their off-color comments, inappropriate actions toward the opposite sex, inability to focus on school work, and difficulty in maintaining relationships.

It is important for the Christian teacher to emphasize to young believers that impurity and pornography reveal an adultery or idol of the heart, and that a change of heart and allegiance is necessary to root out the problem, not just the cessation of behaviors. Once a teenager's mind is committed to impurity, the effects will be indelible. The only alternative will be to help him find a much stronger object of allegiance in his Savior and to help him build his commitment to Christ. The recovery process in this type of struggle is often long and difficult. The student will need the support and prayers of his teacher and other believers as well as a system of accountability. He may also be helped by a number of websites and help groups available for those who are caught in sexual brokenness.

The student may struggle with depression. Though the student may try to hide depression or may not recognize it in himself, this area of struggle may be identified

more easily than others because of its outward signs. The teacher can notice a student who is withdrawn and sad, or who expresses feelings of worthlessness for long periods of time. The teacher can hear the negative and hopeless comments, see the effects of related disorders and the inability to concentrate, and watch the decline of attention and grades in class. Though mild depression is a common, human problem, the teacher must monitor his students for progressive, severe symptoms. The teacher can urge the receptive student toward better nutrition and exercise habits or involvement with believers who will encourage him and offer him acceptance. Sometimes a small amount of kindness from the teacher will be what a student needs; at other times the teacher will be wise to talk with parents or school authorities about the student's apparent problem.

The student may struggle with eating disorders. Closely tied to struggles with self-image and depression, eating disorders are epidemic among American youth. Often they begin with a teenager's desire for a certain appearance or a need to feel in control. The sufferer can keep the actual practice of the disorder—anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating—a secret for quite some time. However, informed adults can notice the signs of the disorder: physical deterioration, withdrawal from the group, inability to concentrate, and even stealing. The physical effects are numerous and will often require treatment from trained medical personnel. The teacher, however, may be the one in whom a desperate teen confides if he becomes frightened by the uncontrolled cycle of his habits or the physical harm it is causing. At that point, for the student's good, the teacher must notify school authorities who will advise the parents. The teacher should also offer to be an encourager for the student if he goes through the times of treatment or rehabilitation, thus proving that God loves the student and has a better way for him to live.

The student may struggle with internet addiction. Internet addiction seems to be a quickly growing problem. Numerous students admit to spending too much time online with their friends or being overly involved in computer games. Often students have their own computers at home, and parental control of their use seems to be insufficient. Like any other addictive behaviors, internet addiction has consequences that are observable in the classroom. The student may come to class overly tired, unprepared, and without motivation to relate to his studies or to others. Like pornography addiction, internet addiction leads to habits of fantasy and manipulation and therefore erodes the student's ability to maintain relationship with real people in a real world. Unlike pornography addiction, however, is the newness of the problem, though it probably carries all the basic dangers of any addictive behavior. The teacher who knows that internet addiction may be present in a student's life can point out to him and his parents its potential to control, distract, and isolate. The teacher can urge believing students to view internet addiction as a ruling idol that has replaced God's control of his time and attention.

Areas of inter-personal struggle

The student may struggle with peer pressure. Teenagers are under constant pressure to conform to the group in appearance, thinking, and activities. Most of them feel that to fail to do so will bring ridicule and ostracism. Peer pressure can reach amazing proportions; the student who does not have an alternative source of acceptance may feel helpless as he repeatedly conforms. The teacher who sees a student constantly giving in to this pressure can assume that there may be problems in his home relationships, that he does not know how to handle the issue of self-worth, or that he simply has not learned

how to think for himself. Whatever the cause, the teacher is in an ideal position to offer the student an alternative standard of self-analysis and a different set of goals. By giving him affirmation, the teacher finds ways to divert the student's habit of seeking only the group's approval. The teacher may be able to interest him in new, more satisfying ways to spend his time as he realizes how damaging behavior can be which seeks acceptance through conformity. Most of all, the teacher can show him that God, who will never desert him, is the most important one to please, and that His love is without limit or requirements.

The student may struggle with parent relationships and authority issues. An endless number of reasons and situations can cause difficulty between students and their parents. Besides personality differences, parents may be overprotective, permissive, or distant. The student may respond by rebelling, withdrawing, becoming angry, developing physical disorders, turning to addictions and substance abuse, practicing inappropriate sexual behavior, or sinking into depression. The teacher is foolish if he does not give great prayer attention and alertness to the possible family-based causes of these symptoms. Because the family situation is probably the most powerful influence in a student's development, nothing will cause deeper responsive behaviors.

The Christian student may also face the conflict of being part of a non-believing family, standing for his faith against opposition, ridicule, or indifference. In such a case the Christian teacher can play a tremendous role of encourager, listener, prayer support person, and source of biblical truth. The student may have no one else who shows him the way to stability in the midst of what may seem to be endless and hopeless situations. The teacher can help the student see the role of sin and selfishness in the difficulties, and

can point toward the need for forgiveness, repentance, trust in God, compassion, and patience.

The teacher may often have to work backwards from observed symptoms to find causes for the student's behavior, and he will need to bear in mind that many students and families will not be forthcoming or helpful regarding their dysfunctions. Thus, much of the teacher's ministry may be in prayer or simply in being available to the student. Again, the teacher must realize and must advise the student that he is duty-bound to contact school and legal authorities if the student's situation warrants it. However, the teacher can promise to walk through the difficulties with the student as much as possible.

The student may struggle with family trauma. Trauma can be defined as that which shocks or damages a system. That system requires treatment and healing in order to survive, though perhaps in an altered state. Family traumas destroy or permanently damage the family structure. Some family traumas are unavoidable, but often they are brought upon the family by one or more family members and will have long-term effects. These traumas may include addictive behavior, divorce, a single-parent situation, suicide, violence, unemployment, financial crises, disaster/loss, or death. In addition, current social trends have produced many variations of blended families, bringing a myriad of emotional pressures and role changes, the effects of which can be explosive. Whatever the trauma, its effects (anger, confusion, depression) come into the classroom.

The Christian teacher can point out that Scripture recounts all types of family trauma including favoritism, incest, divorce, and murder. Though sin and selfishness are at the root of many family traumas, the believer can see family trauma as something that pushes him closer to his Savior. The student living in ongoing traumatic situations will probably

have to deal frequently with anger, and he will have to rely on the Lord to avoid being permanently warped in his thinking and outlook. The teacher must make it clear that confidences will be kept unless there is danger or illegal behavior involved. Still, the teacher can help tremendously as a listener and encourager, serving as a spiritual advisor for the student and offering fellowship and prayer support. The teacher will also be wise to keep at least one other adult (fellow-teacher, pastor) advised with his ministry to students living with family trauma.

The student may struggle with abuse. Abuse includes various types of behavior that can physically injure or psychologically damage another person. It is the product of the abuser's patterns of self-gratification, uncontrolled anger, substance abuse, or behavior patterns ingrained from childhood. Abuse can be physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological, any of which will produce feelings of worthlessness and guilt, distrust of others, anger and depression, and a warped view of life.

The teacher will need to recognize symptoms of all four types of abuse. A young person who is being sexually abused will often become withdrawn, impassive, unable to relate to the opposite sex, or will display inappropriate sexual activity or anger. Psychological and verbal abuse will often cause confusion and anger, sadness and depression, feelings of worthlessness, unrealistic fantasies, and the inability to view life in a balanced, healthy manner. Physical abuse will bring injury and fear, the inability to trust and relate to others, and possibly violent behavior on the part of the abused teenager. The observant teacher will respond to visible signs of abuse by contacting school authorities who can decide whether civil authorities should be informed. The teacher

should not confront the abuser on his own, but he should make it clear to the student that he will be there to support him throughout the process of dealing with the situation.

Abusive situations first require that the teacher work for the safety of the student. Then he will be able to help the student understand the sin-root of abuse and the sufficient answer that is found in the Gospel. The teacher can help the student explore his anger and the need for forgiveness; he will need to communicate compassion and steady love as the student works through various issues, causes, and responses.

Being informed of the basics of the areas of struggle will help the Christian teacher's insight, but he should remember to call on the resources of trained professionals whenever needed. The teacher's main role is to be informed and alert, to listen, pray, encourage, and guide the student into survival and transformation. If situations are serious enough to require legal or medical intervention, then the teacher-mentor should walk through those experiences with the student to whatever extent is possible. Thereby the teacher reflects the pattern and love of Jesus Christ.

Importance of Prayer

Prayer has been mentioned numerous times as a necessary ingredient of teacher-to-student ministry. Its crucial and central nature cannot be overstated. No one seriously undertaking any kind of inter-personal ministry should fail to understand its nature and its importance. The Apostle Paul emphasized its centrality by calling for it repeatedly as part of the battle "against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of

evil in the heavenly realms.”²³ It is not a pious after-thought to serious ministry; it is a major part of the warfare.

The Christian teacher will learn to hold the student and his needs before the Lord every time they cross his mind. The teacher will be standing with the Lord for the accomplishment of his will in the student’s life, even if it is not clear what that may involve. He will let the student know that he prays faithfully for him, thus teaching by example the role of prayer in a believer’s life.

The Christian teacher must regard prayer as his lifeline; he should come to see it as the heart beat of his relationship with the Lord, a constant conversation and exchange of thoughts as he holds his heart and mind before the Lord and reminds himself of Scripture’s responses. To practice this kind of a prayer relationship gives practical meaning to Paul’s command, “Pray continually.”²⁴ It is intercession. It is what is needed at the heart of teacher-to-student ministry that is genuinely involved with and dependent upon God for wisdom and guidance. The absence of prayer-dependence will allow ministry to become surface or self-serving, lacking in direction, and eventually meaningless or misguided. The Christian teacher whose ministry flows from his own saturation with Scripture and submission to Christ will be aware of the centrality of prayer. Indeed, his prayer involvement will be a barometer of his own relationship with the Lord.

On this point, direction can be drawn from Christopher Dock, the eighteenth century schoolmaster who produced the first American book on education. He is also known for his intense prayer ministry for his students. A memorial stone to Dock, raised by the

²³ Eph. 6:10-18.

²⁴ 1 Thess. 5:17.

Montgomery County (PA) Historical Society, reads: “Here Christopher Dock, who in 1750 wrote the earliest American essay on pedagogy, taught school and here in 1771 died on his knees in prayer.” One of Dock’s biographers makes a telling observation about this kind of teacher.

Apparently Dock’s rigorous *daily communion with God* provided him with unusual insight in his chosen field of endeavor. It was this same *daily communion with God* that accounts also for his own *professional growth* year after year. His was an in-service training with God as Supervisor, and without the advantage of faculty meetings, professional conferences, and postgraduate courses. Dock would not have despised any of these assets to good teaching, but we may need to ponder the possibility that no amount of formal professional training will alone supply the depth and breadth of insight which effective teaching requires. “I saw in advance,” he says, “that if I wanted to achieve anything edifying with the children, I must daily, with David, lift up my eyes unto the hills for help. . . .Do not consider that thou canst do all this of thine own power. Pray God daily to strengthen thy good intent.” [Italics mine]²⁵

Nurturing the Ministering Teacher

The job outlined thus far for the teacher in the Christian high school is staggering. He is to be an excellent educator, a student of Scripture, a role model, a mentor, a prayer warrior, a minister who understands his students’ world and struggles, and a modern-day disciple who sits at his Master’s feet in all aspects but also rises to the costly challenges of biblical mentoring and spiritual warfare. His administrators, board, students, and school parents expect these job functions of him. He himself views his work as worthy of sacrifice, and he endeavors to reach out more effectively to his students. The project has examined what the teacher must *be* and has discussed some of the things he must *know* in order to minister to his students. How, then, can the leadership personnel and school structure support and nurture the teacher in these activities? What can they do to

²⁵ Gerald C. Studer, *Christopher Dock, Colonial Schoolmaster* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 133.

help bring genuine teacher-to-student ministry into central focus and to help the teacher bring it into reality?

Describing and Nurturing the Teacher's Preparation

As has been discussed, effective teacher-to-student ministry rests heavily upon what the Christian teacher *is* spiritually and, therefore, upon his resulting life-witness. The teacher's preparation for ministry includes his initial credentials and, more importantly, his on-going spiritual growth. The school's leadership and structure have tremendous influence, for good or ill, on whether the teacher understands what he must be and is successful in reaching and maintaining that spiritual maturity which will facilitate teacher-to-student ministry.

Describing the Teacher's Preparation

Admittedly it is difficult to quantify or guarantee spiritual preparation. The school often depends on records of experience and service, personal testimony, or solicited references in order to evaluate the spiritual maturity of its teaching applicants. However, the school should establish its own definition of the well-prepared teacher, and it should take the initiative in finding candidates who offer a good likelihood of being spiritually prepared.

A practical first step would be regular recruiting visits by the school administrator to the campuses of Bible colleges or Christian liberal arts colleges that have graduates from accredited education programs. In this way the college seniors can become familiar with

the particular Christian school, and the administrator can identify those whom he feels would work well in his school.

A second step is the upgrading of the school's hiring guidelines to include a requirement of formal Bible training. The school can set the specifics of the requirements—a Bible major or minor or a specific number of course hours—but the key is that the training be *formal*, that is, college-level, rostered courses. One reason for initiating this requirement is simply the fact that the structure of a formal course will discipline the student toward serious learning. Another reason is that the study of Scripture merits emphasis and effort; if it is central to life and learning, then it should be the most seriously handled part of one's own education. A third reason for formal Bible training is that the quality of Bible study should equal or exceed the quality of content-area study. For the serious Christian teacher, there should never be an argument on this point; biblical understanding should be his passion and he should welcome any structure that urges him toward it.

Many Christian schools may resist adding such a requirement to their hiring standards. They may cite the idea that, since many teachers do not graduate from Christian liberal arts colleges or Bible colleges, the school's field of prospects will be greatly reduced. A mission board does not accept candidates who are biblically untrained simply because it assumes that few people have thorough biblical training. Similarly, the Christian school cannot avoid adequate hiring standards on the assumption that not many candidates will meet them. If the Christian school views itself as an arm of the Body of Christ in carrying out the Great Commission through Christian education, then it can trust the Lord to bring the personnel he desires. Taking more initiative in seeking out qualified

candidates plus investing much prayer in the recruiting process will yield results. To upgrade hiring requirements would be a step of faith, but that should not be an unfamiliar aspect of ministry. Failure to upgrade biblical training requirements perpetuates a philosophical contradiction within the Christian school.

The school can find ways to meet its biblical training requirements for its current teachers or for new teachers who may not meet the new standards. A time frame can be established within which the teacher would acquire those hours. Online courses are available from many Christian colleges and universities. The Christian school can specify the colleges or universities that would fit its biblical stance. It can also specify the number of credit hours and the types of courses desired. Summer courses are available as are evening courses if the Christian school is near one of the selected colleges or universities. However, it should be clarified that acceptable Bible training must not be on the level of Sunday School, seminar CEUs, or video series. Beneficial as these are, they do not lend themselves to the depth of study needed for the thorough training of the Christian teacher.

Some schools may consider a tailored program for training teachers to be “campus ministers.” Lancaster Mennonite School, Lancaster, PA, envisions this for any interested teachers who would take a core of courses specified for them by the Mennonite Education Agency. The courses would be taught at their denominational colleges, and upon completion, the teachers would be credentialed by the church and would fill a chaplain function on campus in addition to their classroom teaching. Any evangelical Christian school could adopt the same structure, choosing its core of courses, online or at selected colleges, as a basis of training. The idea would provide a beginning outline for

training and would demonstrate the school's conviction that such preparation is important. In the Lancaster area, the presence of Lancaster Bible College would make this particularly workable. If enough evangelical Christian schools agreed to do this, perhaps a formal training program could someday be developed to help prepare teachers for ministry and which would be recognized by any participating school.

Linked to the Bible training requirement is the fact that the school must adjust its budget to make tuition assistance a priority, especially if the school intends to require the training of its current teachers. The assistance would not have to cover all expenses, but should cover a good percentage of the cost. Presumably, if a school revises its recruitment techniques and requirements in this area, the costs of subsidizing remedial tuition will decrease over the years.

Obviously the Christian school looks for other facets of teacher preparation in addition to Bible training. However, this is the area that has been neglected and is most in need of definite clarification. The continued absence of this element will limit the depth and effectiveness of teacher-to-student ministry

Nurturing the Teacher's Preparation

Having defined and recruited teachers who will be able to mold their students spiritually as well as academically, the school is obligated to do all it can to help those teachers continue to be spiritually and practically able and ready to carry out teacher-to-student ministry. This obligation can be carried out in two ways. First, the school provides what is necessary to cultivate the teacher's spiritual and personal growth and

well-being. Second, the school establishes practices that facilitate and enable teacher-to-student ministry.

Nurturing the teacher spiritually and personally

What can a school do to help its teachers maintain their spiritual health and the assurance that they are part of an important ministry? What can a school put into its practices that will refresh and nourish the teacher in his work?

First and foremost, the administration and board can establish a prayer support system for the teachers. There should be administration meetings (if there are several administrators) and board meetings solely devoted to prayer for the faculty and ministry of the school. Parents could be encouraged to create their own group to meet weekly for the same purposes. There should be a system of contact with faculty to solicit prayer concerns. If necessary, there should be in-service instruction on prayer, or perhaps a year-long set of weekly devotionals or readings emphasizing the nature of prayer and its absolutely essential position in ministry.

Second, the school should begin establishing a faculty library. This will naturally include items related to classroom methods, discipline, or philosophy. Equally important, however, should be books or video series that will be useful in the teacher's Bible training and spiritual growth. Reference works should be there. Bible encyclopedias and commentaries should be added along with resources that help the teacher understand the youth culture, Christian psychology, or areas in which teenagers struggle. Periodicals that cover these areas should also be included. Equipping such a library will take time but can be facilitated by fund-raisers or from regular sources of income such as

concessions sales at sports activities. Regardless of its gradual development, it will be a resource that will solidly benefit the teacher's growth and ability to minister.

Third, the school should establish a habit of in-service times for consideration of the spiritual aspects of their work. Outside speakers could be used each semester to share biblical topics primarily for the spiritual refreshment of the faculty. Area pastors could be invited, or a book on some aspect of personal spiritual formation could be read in advanced and discussed at the in-service. For the latter, use of a faculty member to lead the discussion would probably facilitate helpful sharing. Many formats could be used, but the stated aim should be spiritual refreshment and sharing so the teachers realize their spiritual health is important within the school structure.

Fourth, the school should sponsor attendance at regional ACSI conventions, the summer conventions of IICSE held at Columbia International University, Columbia, SC, and Kingdom School Institutes. Workshop selections run the gamut from counseling and discipline to sports and fund-raising. Though sometimes the ministry-related topics are scarce, these encouraging conventions cultivate the teachers' morale and are an available platform for presenting helpful material and for establishing networks of support.

Fifth, the school will be wise to organize annual faculty/administration retreats, perhaps split by gender, for the purpose of fellowship, prayer, and serious spiritual considerations. The fall of the year may be the best time or just prior to the start of the school year. A year-end retreat would also be beneficial. Bonding between staff members will be enhanced, and lines of communication can be established on the basis of shared fellowship, free of the structure of position or responsibility.

Sixth, regardless of the size of the school, a system of “pod” groups can be organized and given time to meet weekly. Three or four teachers would make up a group, preferably along gender lines. The purpose of the group would be close, personal nurturing; the group would become an intimate team for prayer, Bible sharing, and encouragement. Group times would be specifically for support and refreshing, time for the teacher personally, not a time for dealing with school issues.

Nurturing ministry through school practices and policies

Teacher-to-student ministry will not happen accidentally. It must be intentionally pursued and supported. Having provided systems to prepare and support the teacher spiritually and personally, the school should ask what it can do on a practical level to facilitate and implement that ministry. The following suggestions are the product of personal observation, conversations with classroom teachers, and reflection upon ministry possibilities that would specifically respond to student needs.

First, the school should find ways to give the teacher more time to be available to the students. One way this could be done is through the establishment of a corps of volunteers (parents, grandparents, friends of the school) who could cover many of the extra duties the teachers must fulfill. These could include morning hall duty, lunch time duties, after-school bus duty, and classroom cleaning.

Second, mentoring groups could be assigned to the individual teachers. While this approach may result in rather shallow mentoring, it would give students a chance to be with teachers on something other than a classroom basis. The Lord could use it to establish deeper, individual mentoring connections, and some mentoring groups may

flourish as a whole, depending on how the time is used. One key to success may be to train the teachers first in what a mentoring relationship should be and to help them gain a vision for the ministry.

Third, in-service time should be used to train teachers regarding the areas of struggle that teens face. The teachers should be aware of the symptoms they may be seeing in the students, and they should be invited to communicate them to administration or the school nurse. It can be assumed that, though they have heard of such things as bulimia or pornography addiction, teachers probably would either not notice the symptoms in their students or else would not know what those symptoms might be revealing. Specific information resources on these topics could be added to the faculty library.

Fourth, closely related to being able to recognize symptoms of struggle is the need to gather and make available to the teachers any basic family information that the family may be willing to share. This could be requested voluntarily from incoming families at the time of registration, making it clear that its sole purpose is to let the teachers know confidentially anything that will help them work with the students. A questionnaire could inquire about family structure (adoption, remarriage or separation, widowhood, step- or foster-parents, parental absence due to work schedules, birth order of children), past or present stresses (financial crisis, police records, unemployment), and spiritual aspects (church attended and degree of involvement, testimony, goals the parents have for their children). Knowing the family situation would help greatly as the teacher tries to understand the student's needs and possible causes of behavior. With the parents' permission, the information from the questionnaires would be kept confidentially in the students' individual record files for the teacher's use only.

Fifth, the school must look for ways to keep the faculty members from feeling isolated. While any good teacher is glad to be trusted to oversee his teaching and classroom with freedom, he will also appreciate administrative efforts to include him in the whole of the school ministry. The administrator can communicate this inclusion by making an effort to build contact and listening/communication with the teachers. He can stop by their rooms after school to chat and listen, seriously discovering, discussing, and remembering their concerns, victories, and needs. Semester appointments with each teacher for the same purposes should be a part of the administrator's schedule. The administrator must make the effort to know his teachers with care and involvement if he is to know how to enhance their ministry to the students. It becomes difficult to find time to accomplish a system of contact if the administrators also teach classes, but any type of simple expressions of appreciation and care will go a long way toward cementing the necessary teacher-administrator connection.

To increase the teacher's involvement, the administrator could form a faculty advisory committee, made up of representative teachers from grade level or subject areas. The committee would meet regularly (weekly or monthly) in order to voice teacher concerns and give updates or for the administrator to solicit insight and advice on his vision for the school. The committee would be a faculty link to the administrator and to the board through the administrator. Ideally the administrator would establish the committee because he genuinely wanted to have faculty contact and input, not simply to placate them or to create an impression of unity. The committee would give the teacher assurance that he is being heard and that he is an important part of the whole.

Finally, the board could invite the faculty to send a representative to attend board meetings as a non-voting observer or advisor. Also, the board and administration could sponsor various social or in-service functions that would bring them together with the faculty for fellowship, discussion, and prayer.

The facets of teacher-to-student ministry, along with the preparing and nurturing of the educators who will accomplish it, all combine to outline a highly inter-dependent work. Accurately speaking, the job of describing and supporting the Christian teacher and building the work of teacher-to-student ministry is never finished. Many aspects need close and constant scrutiny. However, the Lord, who has designed it and who oversees it all, is very wise. He is capable of directing the individual school to see its weaknesses and strengths and to rely prayerfully on his guidance, his power, and his provision to accomplish his work. May the Christian school demonstrate that it genuinely believes that “from him and through him and to him are all things.”²⁶

²⁶ Rom. 11:36.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The project has sought to define and interpret the present status, challenges, and potential of the evangelical Christian high school, especially with reference to teacher-to-student ministry as its central distinctive. Conclusions have been based on several factors: a survey of literature relevant to the evangelical Christian school; informal surveys of students, parents, teachers and administrators; anecdotal responses from student focus groups and individual teachers; and personal impressions drawn from more than thirty-five years of observation or involvement in Christian school teaching.

It can be accurately said that the evangelical Christian high school in the United States is at a crossroads. It has attained academic excellence and recognition, and it offers extra-curricular and fine arts programs that, when proportioned by size, are comparable to public schools, if not better. Its students excel on standardized tests and on college campuses. The members of the Christian school community—students, parents, teachers, and administrators—all agree that spiritual formation and ministry aspects are important and desirable. However, judging from the schools' lack of aggressive preparation and provision for that ministry, and from the frustration felt by many teachers and students regarding its effectiveness, a serious philosophical and practical disconnection exists between the idea and the accomplishment of that ministry.

Has the school's logical, main distinctive been lost? Has the work of mentoring the spiritual education and growth of young believers been eclipsed? Has the Christian high school reached a point at which such emphasis and activity are merely a hope or an assumption? Those who provide philosophical and practical guidance for the Christian school movement, the Christian high school itself, and Christian teachers all need to recognize what has brought the school to its present, tenuous position. They need to take the challenge of reversing the present trend toward spiritual ineffectiveness by committing to the pursuit of the Christian school's *real* distinctive.

Summary of Related Literature

A review of the flow of literature related to the evangelical Christian school and spanning roughly the last forty years has demonstrated some of the trends and factors already discussed. Numerous books, periodical articles, and online articles were viewed, and the following four summary impressions were noted.

First, several authors from the early days of the movement, such as Anthony Fortosis and Roy Lowrie, spoke specifically to the "internal" life elements that were essential for the Christian school teacher. Several of their books were thorough and frank in discussion details of the Christian teacher's spiritual and personal life such as having a sacrificial attitude, controlling one's temper, humility, and work ethic. There was no hesitation to speak biblically to the teacher's heart.

Second, the bulk of surveyed writings since then seem to avoid the issue of the spiritual prerequisites needed by a ministering teacher. There is an apparent assumption that such characteristics are resident in the lives of the teachers who are urged to be

Christian/biblical/spiritual role models and are presumed to be capable of communicating biblical truth. One wonders if this omission is the result of the present-day thought that everyone is “okay” at heart and that no one should tell another what to think or feel. Regardless of its source, this loss of clarity regarding the biblical profile of the Christian teacher surely coincides with the loss of focus on the ministry and mission of the Christian school as a discipling arm of the Body of Christ.

Third, current literature is largely concerned with one of two things: a rather broad discussion of Christian philosophy of education, or incisive, narrowly defined discussions of methods or specific needs in the educational process. The writings seem to assume a Christian basis but often do not mention a crux that has impact primarily because it is scriptural. The avoidance is subtle but fairly pervasive and lends itself eventually to discussions that are totally devoid of scriptural basis or concepts of spiritual guidance. Indeed, often the philosophical bases seem to be somewhat accepting of assumptions of the day which are essentially counter to Scripture.

Fourth, a few recent books have begun to come full circle and are within close range of discussing the heart of the issue: the conviction that student conversion and discipling are at the core of education that is Christian, as are also the crucial life-bases and thought-bases of the teacher. Some of the best are Richard Riesen’s *Piety and Philosophy*, Glen Schultz’s *Kingdom Education*, and Donovan Graham’s *Teaching Redemptively*. The emerging tone of these recent writers indicates a motivating perception that something has been missing at the heart of the Christian high school. If the core issues continue to be approached, their implications will be noticed also.

Taken as a whole, the literature that supports the evangelical Christian school is excellent and detailed, especially if the recent trend continues which speaks to the mind and heart of the teacher. However, the overview also underscores the continuing task of today's Christian school community. It must move to support the heart and work of the Christian teacher, being concerned for and nurturing of his usability to the Lord for the discipling of his believing students.

Causes and Correction of Current Ineffectiveness

Three deficiencies have led to the present, spiritual weakness within the Christian high school. First, for various reasons, the schools do not understand or focus on their biblical mandate and the ramifications of that mandate that include real spiritual warfare. The school needs to understand its challenges, its spiritual weapons, and its God. Second, biblical training requirements for teachers and administrators are weak or non-existent. Third, the work of mentoring is greatly limited by the teacher's lack of biblical training, his ignorance of the youth culture, and school schedules that leave little time for unstructured teacher-student contact.

Neglected Biblical Mandate

Today's Christian high schools often fail to see themselves as engaged in a life-and-death struggle for the souls and lives of their students. Far from being an overstatement, this is Scripture's description of the serious believer's life.¹ How much more, then, should it describe a ministry that purposes to help transform lives and ground young believers? Other, more comfortable emphases have moved in to blunt any mind-set that

¹ Eph. 6:10-18.

supports discipling opportunities in every way possible in keeping with an eternal value system. Habit becomes the worst enemy, perhaps, along with the ease of hiding from the harsh realities of spiritual warfare and the culture in which the school exists.

What can reestablish proper focus for the Christian high school? First, core values, mission statements, vision statements, and philosophies of education should be reviewed rigorously to make sure they reflect the biblical mandate for discipling along with a clear understanding of the Gospel of redemption that transforms lives. These documents should clearly set the spiritual goals of the school in primary position. Next, under administrative leadership or in grade or subject area groups, the faculty should regularly discuss exactly what the mission/core values/vision statements mean with regard to specifics they desire to cultivate in the students. Teachers should ask how they are working toward informing and molding the students according to these goals in their individual classrooms, content, and teaching methods. This process of inquiry should be saturated with prayer, and serious planning, and changes should be made where needed, whether in the guiding statements themselves or in their outworking in the classrooms.

Inadequate Training Requirements

The biblical training requirements of both teachers and administrators are weak or non-existent. None of the schools interviewed for this project had any Bible training requirements for their leadership or teaching personnel. Teachers who are to exhibit excellence in biblical and spiritual leadership as well as in academics cannot possibly do so without being seriously trained in Scripture and theology. How can they fully and accurately model or teach something that is not as carefully and formally studied as their

academic field? This is a glaring, philosophical and practical contradiction within the evangelical Christian school. Indeed it may take a great effort for schools and teachers alike to correct the situation, but the mandate, goals, and eternal outcome warrant the effort. Correcting this inequity will do much to prepare the Christian teacher to reach his students deeply and thoroughly.

Administrators also should have formal Bible training. Nothing will do more to set the proper course of the Christian school than a godly administrator who lives and leads from a thoroughly biblical mind-set.

The individual school should set specific requirements in this area, both for current staff and for incoming candidates. In both cases, those who upgrade their biblical and theological preparation will come to realize that exposure to a larger view of God and of Scripture expands and improves every aspect of their work as teachers and mentors.

Limited Awareness and Mentoring Facilitation

Mentoring takes preparation and time. In addition to the teacher's biblical training, that preparation includes insight into the student's world and culture. The teacher may never know all the family factors that the student faces, but with some effort he can stay abreast of the youth culture. This is an invaluable practice. Teachers find the Christian school to be an easy place to hide from the rough realities of the youth world. The students are usually adept at displaying outward conduct that they know will please the Christian adult, and the teacher is often glad to believe that those exteriors are real. Teachers can avoid seeing the corruption that surrounds and often invades the students' lives. Training seminars and materials concerning the youth culture are an immediate

necessity for the Christian high school teacher. The students' needs will quickly become obvious, and with a biblical mind-set, the teacher will know what the core issues are and how to answer them with redemptive truth.

Simple things like school schedules can also stymie mentoring efforts. Most of the teachers who responded to questionnaires for this project mentioned a lack of time for involvement with students. Because of family or other obligations, some teachers are unable to stay after school or be sponsors of extra-curricular activities. Schools need to tailor daily or weekly schedules to include mentoring time opportunities or find ways to relieve the teacher of non-teaching duties in order to provide time for unstructured student contact. A school that is convinced of the centrality of teacher-to-student ministry will make the provision of time and opportunities one of its ongoing concerns.

Recognizing and Pursuing the *Real* Distinctive

Excellence in all things is the Christian school's stewardship to her Lord; nothing has a lessened rank, as the Apostle Paul directs believers, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."² However, there is legitimate gradation of purpose and goal. If the Christian school does not emphasize above everything else its mission of facilitating the conversion and discipling of young believers, then it has no real reason for existing. All mention of biblical worldviews and Christian role models is a thin veneer if the teacher cannot closely, deeply and seriously lead students to know and follow Jesus Christ. This must be the school's clearly stated purpose and its outstanding distinctive. The pattern of Christ himself was one of close, serious, truth-based mentoring. This is the pattern his followers are to repeat. The

² Col. 3:23.

Christian school that prayerfully undertakes to structure itself in order to accomplish this primary purpose will encounter opposition in many forms, but, as is true of any God-directed work, that is no reason for retreat. The school that honors the Savior will prosper in his work. Definitions, practices, goals, and structures may have to be revamped to fulfill his mandate, but that is a small price to pay to be used in building lives for eternity.

Though at a crossroads, the Christian high school is also poised and well positioned for tremendous ministry impact upon the church of tomorrow, and therefore upon the world. With a revitalization of its understanding and preparedness for ministry, the Christian high school can realize its multi-faceted potential because it has focused on and committed itself to the pattern and work of Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Do NOT sign your name on this questionnaire!

Just indicate your age, grade, and gender.

AGE _____ GRADE _____ GENDER (Circle one) M F

Please respond to these questions thoughtfully and honestly.

Read the questions carefully and **circle the number** that most closely expresses your answer. The options are:

1. Agree
2. Agree somewhat
3. Disagree
4. Disagree somewhat
5. Haven't really thought about it

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I'm glad to be attending a Christian high school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The <i>main</i> advantage of being here is the good academics. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The <i>main</i> advantage of being here is the "extras"...sports, drama, music, art, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The <i>main</i> advantage of being here is the Christian teachers/leaders. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. My main goal in life is to have a happy family and good career. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. My main goal in life is to grow spiritually and to follow the Lord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. My main goal in life is to gain the respect of others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I am hesitant to become a Christian. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. It's difficult to find an adult who can answer my questions about the Bible and the Christian life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I'm a Christian, but I don't work very hard at knowing God better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I enjoy spending time praying and learning about Scripture. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I would be glad to find an adult believer who could help me know God better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I don't think it is too important to understand Scripture well at this point in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I believe the Bible is the best, true guide for my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Choosing from the people you know, circle the one person or persons who are the best examples to you of what a Christian should be.

Parents

Church youth leaders/pastors

Friends

School teachers

Other _____

COMMENTS: Below, please write what you would like your high school teachers to do to help you know God and Scripture better.

APPENDIX 2

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please do NOT put your name on the questionnaire!

Grade(s) of students in the high school _____

Please answer the following questions by circling the appropriate number for *each* item listed. "1" would indicate most important; "4" would indicate least important.

In my student's experience at MCCS, I regard the following as:

Academics	1	2	3	4
Athletics	1	2	3	4
Being disciplined	1	2	3	4
Biblical instruction	1	2	3	4
Building a relationship with Christ	1	2	3	4
Career preparation	1	2	3	4
Christian friends	1	2	3	4
Conduct guidelines	1	2	3	4
Fine arts	1	2	3	4
Godly teachers	1	2	3	4
Learning to share one's faith	1	2	3	4
Ministry opportunities	1	2	3	4

>>>>>>>>>>

Choose two. Label your first choice as “1” and the second choice as “2.”

The Christian high school is

- a. ___ a place where my student can find Christian friends.
- b. ___ a place where godly teachers can disciple my student by word and example.
- c. ___ a place that shelters my student from worldly influences.
- d. ___ a place that will help my student avoid wrong choices.
- e. ___ a place where my student receives good academic training.

I want my student most of all to (check only one)

- a. ___ pursue his/her dreams.
- b. ___ be happy in life.
- c. ___ learn to see the world and himself as God does.
- d. ___ develop the skills for building a secure career.

I want the teachers at M CCS to... (rank 1,2,3,4 with “1” being most important.

- a. ___ know and communicate their academic areas well.
- b. ___ know Scripture as well as they do their academic areas.
- c. ___ know how to make learning attractive and fun.
- d. ___ know how to be positive but firm in discipline.

My concept of the *heart* of teacher-to-student ministry is best described as (check only one)

- a. ___ teachers dealing with students in a loving, sensitive manner.
- b. ___ teachers working to bring students to know and follow Christ.
- c. ___ teachers making sure that students learn Christian conduct and lifestyles.

COMMENTS: Please share any thoughts or desires you have regarding teacher-to-student ministry. (For example: What do you see as its essentials? What do you specifically want it to do for your student? How important is it?)

Thank you for your time and input!

6. What do you regard as evidence in your students' lives of effective teacher-to-student ministry? (Choose three and rank in order, #1 being the highest.)
- ___ professions of faith
 - ___ serious desire to know and submit to scripture
 - ___ lifestyle changes
 - ___ pursuit of full-time Christian service careers
 - ___ evidence of thinking with eternal values in view
7. To what extent do you feel that teacher-to-student ministry is a function that parents of your students desire to see in your Christian high school? (Check one.)
- ___ one of several priorities
 - ___ top priority, desire that Christ be central in their students' lives
 - ___ expect spiritual influence and values, but want students to choose their own beliefs
 - ___ feel that a Christian school can be effective without active discipling
8. Does your school have clear teacher-to-student ministry goals that are stated and written into core values, philosophy of education, mission statement or vision statements?(Circle one.)
- yes
 - no
 - not sure
9. Are teacher-to-student ministry goals clearly communicated to staff and school families?
- yes
 - no
 - not sure
10. What aspects of your school's hiring standards and requirements demonstrate concern for a teacher's ability to fulfill teacher-to-student ministry?
- _____
 - _____
 - _____
11. What aspects of your school's regular activities for teachers demonstrate concern for their ability to fulfill teacher-to-student ministry?
- _____
 - _____
 - _____

12. Do you feel that any of the following, within the school context, limit your preparation for or actually discourage you from ministering to your students? (Check as many as apply.)
- lack of time in the schedule
 - lack of attention to the issue
 - lack of funds/opportunities for teacher training/preparation
 - general lack of emphasis on spiritual issues and needs
 - other _____
13. Which of the following do you see as reasons that teachers in the Christian high school may not be effectively fulfilling the potential of teacher-to-student ministry? (Check three.)
- lack of time
 - inability to answer students' questions
 - lack of personal biblical background
 - lack of support from parents/administration/governing bodies
 - feeling uncomfortable with discussing problems or spiritual matters
14. What do you think would be *most* helpful in preparing you personally for more effective teacher-to-student ministry? (Check two.)
- more biblical training
 - more Christian psychology training
 - more prayer/sharing with like-minded colleagues
 - more parental/administrative support regarding spiritual endeavors
15. Do you feel that Christian high schools in general emphasize some other area of campus life and activity above spiritual matters and ministry? (Circle one.)
- yes
 - no
 - perhaps
 - haven't really thought about it
16. Upon what do you base your answer to question #15?
17. What are some ways in which *you* carry out teacher-to-student ministry?

APPENDIX 4

ADMINISTRATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

(This questionnaire was used in face-to-face discussions with a number of Christian high school administrators in the Lancaster, PA, area in the spring of 2005.)

1. How would you define the teacher-to-student ministry potential and goals of the Christian high school?

Does your school have a statement of such goals in its literature?

2. Where do you feel these goals rank in the value system of your school?

Where would your classroom teachers rank them?

Where would your parents/families rank them?

Are these goals clearly communicated to teachers and school families?

3. What personal qualities do you seek in teaching candidates?

4. Since, by virtue of their employment by your school, your teachers are asked to work toward your goals of teacher-to-student ministry, what training/experience/academic qualifications do you look for?

5. How would you describe your classroom teachers' relationship with the school's supervisory or governing personnel?

6. Are there any regular or unique ways in which you facilitate or encourage your teachers in preparing for or in accomplishing the ministry goals of your school?

7. What spiritual outcomes do you hope for or look for in your students and graduates?

8. How would you respond to this statement? [On the whole, Christian high schools have demonstrably attained academic excellence and respectability. However, many have lost or never cultivated an overriding emphasis on the communication to their students of a life pattern that is saturated in knowledge and living with the person of Jesus Christ.]

9. If you agree that such an emphasis should be overriding within the Christian high school, by what means do you feel it can best be established?

10. How would you respond to this statement? [The Christian school is unique when compared to any other ministry in that it has the time, the opportunity, the setting, and the freedom to impact its students on a daily, long-term, multi-faceted basis for Jesus Christ.]

11. As a corollary to the above statement, how would you respond to the following? [All involved in such a ministry bear a heavy responsibility in all areas of personal preparation. Those in leadership are particularly responsible for maintaining an organizational structure which promotes the ministry itself and which nurtures and supports those who do the work of that ministry.]

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VITA

Joan F. Stratton

PERSONAL

Born: May 12, 1946

Married: Raymond A. Stratton, October 17, 1970

Children: Nathan Samuel, born October 7, 1979

Jessica Joy, born October 26, 1981

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Houghton College, 1968

M.A.B.S., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980

CREDENTIALS

ACSI Lifetime Professional certification

PROFESSIONAL

Red Creek Central School, Red Creek, NY, 1968-1969

Norfolk Christian School, Norfolk, VA, 1969-1971

Southeastern Bible College, Birmingham, AL, 1971-1975

First Baptist Academy, Dallas, TX, 1976-1979

Lititz Christian School, Lititz, PA, 1996-2004

Lancaster Bible College, Lancaster, PA, 2002-present

Oxford Area High School, Oxford, PA, 2004-2005

Mount Calvary Christian School, Elizabethtown, PA, 2005-present