

Christian Education Society Orientation

Outline:

1. Definition of a Discerning Christian
 - a. Definition of Discernment
 - b. Biblical Understanding of Discernment
 - c. Search for Examples of Discernment
2. Principles of Discernment
 - a. God at the Center
 - b. Rooted in Scripture
The Bible and the Christian School (Van Dyke)
 - c. Humankind in Relation to Scripture
Humankind Reflects God's Image (Greene)
 - d. Knowledge in Relation to Scripture
Knowing God
The Bible and Learning (Runner)
 - e. Teaching in Relation to Scripture
 - f. The Curriculum in Relation to Scripture
Curriculum Models Creation
3. Developing a Discerning Mind
 - a. The Role of the Parents
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 - c. The Role of the School
4. Practicing Discernment
 - a. Classroom Applications
 - b. World and Life View
 - c. Responsive Obedience
5. Questions About the School and Programs

Welcome to Shoreline Christian School! This workbook is designed to acquaint you with the philosophy and purpose of the school and its programs. Rather than lecturing on the topic, you get to do some guided reflection and small group discussion. It is my belief that this approach will help you to better "own" the information. Within this framework, there are the following ground rules:

a. The lessons are meant to develop an understanding of the school, its programs, and its purpose. While the lessons deal with theological issues, it is not the purpose of these meetings nor of the school to indoctrinate you with a single denomination's system of beliefs.

b. Differing opinions are to be respected. With over eighty different Christian churches represented by the students and their families, it is understood that there are a wide variety of expressions of Christian faith and worship.

c. The discussion is meant to be informal and an avenue for future discussions. We only want to introduce you to the essence of who and what we are.

Getting to Know You

Your Name:

Grades of Your Child(ren):

Occupation(s):

Why did you decide to send your children to Shoreline Christian School?

When I was at School, I Learned...

Robert Fulgum states: "Everything I needed to know I learned in kindergarten."
List five lessons you learned in school?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What we really begin to discover is that there is more to learning than the memorization of a body of knowledge. Learning is never really proven until the student shows they know how to apply what they have learned. In essence, that is what we are trying to do at Shoreline Christian School. We want the students to use what they are learning to be discerning Christians.

Webster defines the word "discern" as:

To perceive or recognize clearly

A "discerning" person is defined as:

Having good judgment; Astute

With these definitions in mind, what do the following verses say about discernment:

1. Genesis 3:1-7
2. I Kings 3:7-15
3. Romans 12:2
4. Philippians 1:9-11
5. Hebrews 5:11-6:3
6. I Corinthians 1:18-30
7. II Corinthians 1: 18-22

In the literature of Scripture, wisdom is, broadly speaking, the knowledge of God's world and the knack of fitting oneself into it. The wise person knows creation. She knows the boundaries and limits, understands its laws and rhythms, discerns its times and seasons, respects its great dynamics. She understands that creation possesses its own integrity and significance quite apart from her claim on it and quite apart from any possibility that creation will make her happy. The wise person *gives in* to creation and to God—and she does the first because she does the second. She knows that wisdom itself is the Lord's, and so is its fullness. She knows some of the deep grains and textures of the world because she knows some of the ways and habits of its maker....Discernment is a mark of wisdom: it shows a kind of attentive respect for reality. The discerning person notices the differences between things but also the connections between them.

(Cornelius Plantinga Jr. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*. Eerdmans, 1995 pg 115 – 116)

How do I Know...?

Discernment involves making judgments. This means it is as important to say yes as it is to say no. Any judgments require a basis or foundation from which to evaluate choices. This concept is emphasized in the story of the wise man and foolish man building their house, Matthew 7:24-27. As Christians, we realize our judgments need to be rooted in God as He reveals Himself in His Son, through His Spirit, in His Word, and through His Creation.

A. The Role of the Son:

Read John 1:1-18 and How is God made known through His Son?

B. The Role of the Spirit:

Cornelius Plantinga Jr. in his book Beyond Doubt states:

How do we know? Perhaps the plainest to say, first, is that we have a strong inner conviction. We are **convinced** of God. And we discover that the Bible knows about this strange, unshakable conviction. It calls it the witness of the Holy Spirit.

As it turns out, the Spirit is the hidden persuader in our otherwise doubtful sources. It is the Spirit who stimulates childlike faith in what our parents say and do about God. The Spirit witnesses to the truth of the Scriptures, telling us in our hearts that "they are from God." The Spirit sparks faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is even the Holy Spirit who is brooding over our deep places when we ache with the sense of God in creation. (pg. 6)

Read John 14:15-27. How is God made known through His Spirit?

C. The Role of Scripture:

The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. Having made this awesome statement, what does it mean?

Read II Timothy 3:16-17. How are we to use the Bible?

D. The Role of Creation:

Bernard Zylstra in a preface to The Bible in Relation to Learning states:

Creation is the theater of God's Glory. That's how it was made in the beginning; that what it is intended for today. From the outset God the Father established an all-embracing covenant with His creation- a covenant of divine love on one hand and creaturely praise on the other. The covenant is as wide as creation. That covenant came into being when God spoke the words, "Let there be," and there was. The Creator speaks His majestic Words, utters His ordinances, and creatures come into being immediately shaped as praisers, servants, lovers of their Maker. To be creature is to be an addressee of the sovereign Word of the Lord: "be my servant, sing forth my praise."

Sin is disservice, disobedience, dishonor. It is the antithesis to God's thesis. It is the refusal of mankind, in Adam its covenantal head, to love, serve, and obey the Creator...And it (sin) destroys the peace in Man's relation with nature, of which mankind was created crown.

Redemption is the restoration of creation as the theater of God's Glory. God the Father accomplishes this restoration through the Lamb Who as slain, reconciling to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20).

This description of creation, sin, and redemption has two very important directives for Christian Education:

1. The school's curriculum and programs model the cohesiveness of creation and involve the student in the redemptive power of the cross.
2. Each student is an image bearer of the Creator and discernment should be used to foster responsive obedience. This means that the school should be:
 - a. A place where we unwrap the gifts that God has given the students.
 - b. A community that shares each other's joys and concerns.
 - c. A group that seeks shalom

The Earth is the Lord's

John Van Dyk in his booklet, The Beginning of Wisdom applies Psalm 24:1 to education as follows:

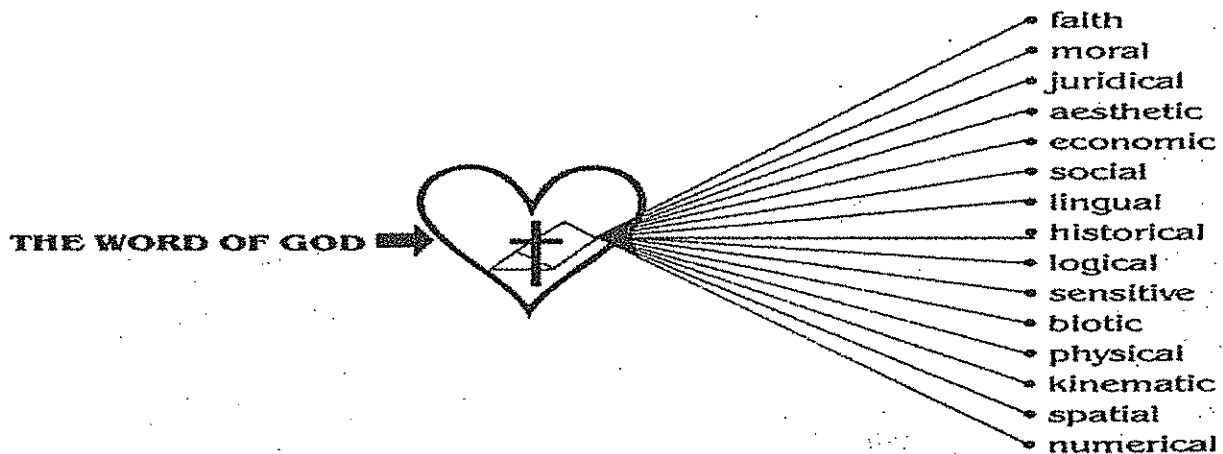
This means that all components of human life and education are subject to the will of God. There cannot be, for example, parts of the curriculum which have nothing to do with the Christian faith. There cannot be neutral science or valueless fact. No part of life or education, no matter how large or small, can stand apart from God's sovereign will. Because the earth is the Lord's, all things must serve Him and respond to his will.

Controlled by this biblical perspective, the Christian school rejects the dualistic view that human life is divided into two separate, mutually exclusive realms- a spiritual realm of independent science and reason to which the Word of God has nothing to say. The Bible makes it clear that God's Word and Spirit speak to and require response for the whole of our life (Acts 17:28).

TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge should lead us to the understanding of the Lordship of Christ over creation and the restoration of Truth. Since the attainment of knowledge is a life-long process, it is the responsibility of the school to help prepare the students to continually seek the knowledge that prepares them for service to our Lord. As the student grows in the knowledge of the Lord, they begin to understand that truth is not a collection of facts or scientifically proven statements, but that truth is a heart commitment to respond obediently to the Christ who proclaimed himself the truth and the life. Truth is rooted in the Bible as it reveals all of creation. The central theme of creation is the relationship of God and humankind. (Shoreline Foundational Statement)

This view of creation effects the way we develop our curriculum and programs at Shoreline Christian School. Dr. Al Greene in his workshop entitled "A Christian Mind in a Secular Age" uses the following illustration to show how our school subjects are generated from our view of creation: (IV)



There is a fable about three blind men that were asked to describe an elephant. The first man felt the elephant's trunk and described the elephant as similar to a snake. The second man felt the elephant's side. He believed the elephant to be a wall if immense proportions. The third man felt the elephant's leg and declared the elephant to be similar to a tree trunk. Each was right as far as they went, but each missed the whole picture because they were only able to feel a fraction of the whole.

In the same vein, the school's curriculum must be designed to help the students understand the how creation reflects God. No one subject or area of interest can possibly reveal the glory of the Lord by itself. Each area must contribute to the understanding of cohesiveness that mirrors creation. This is the school's greatest challenge. How would each of the following classes/courses help you to understand creation:

Art

Math

Science

Physical Education

Occupational Skills

Bible Courses

What Does God Look Like?

Humankind was created as the crowning of creation. We are created in God's image. With all of our faults, how do we reflect God? Read the following:

Genesis 1:26-27

Psalm 8

I Corinthians 12:12-30

Matthew 5:1-11

After all the beauty and glory of a perfect creation, why did God create Adam and Eve?

As Christian, how do we REFLECT the image of God? (Galatians 5:22-26)

Our view of the child as an image bearer of God effects the foundation of our educational program. After all, the school exists for the children and their parents. The children do not exist for the school.

The Tripod

Once we understand the whys of Christian Education, it is time to begin to put it into practice. For Shoreline Christian School to be successful in its approach, the school must work in conjunction with the parents and the larger Christian community to provide a more complete environment. John Van Dyk states this in the following manner:

The primary function of the church is to build up the life of faith, by way of worship and preaching of the Word. The home sets the religious direction for our children and provides a context of love and trust in which they can mature and achieve emotional security. The school, however, supplies specialized instruction, a Christian school prepares our children to serve the Lord and fellow human beings as it leads them in to a deepening understanding of the world. (7)

The Role of the Church in education:

What do the following verses emphasize what is stated in Van Dyk's statement:

Psalm 100

Psalm 122

Hebrew 5:11 - 6:3

The Role of the Parents:

What do the following verses indicate about the role of the parents in the educational process:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Exodus 20:12

Psalm 78

Ephesians 6:1-4

Why do we describe the relationship between the church, the home, and the school as a tripod? What happens when this tripod falls apart?

Putting it All Together

Time for Your Questions.