

# Foundational Issues in Christian Education

An Introduction in  
Evangelical Perspective

Third Edition

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# Introduction

In commenting on the future of Christianity in 1995, the theologian Alister McGrath saw the potential for evangelical Christians to make a contribution. This continuing contribution relates to the viability of orthodoxy and the need to teach a living faith for the postmodern world.<sup>1</sup> For this to be possible, Christians are called to be faithful in the theory and practice of Christian education to assure the transmission of a living faith to the rising generations. In support of this task, Christian educators are called upon to reappraise their thought and practice in relation to the foundational issues of Christian education. These foundational issues represent perennial or recurrent questions for those involved in the teaching ministries of the church. They deserve careful consideration by those who reflect upon their ministries of the past, present, and future.

This book in its third edition explores the disciplines used to form a holistic and integrated conception of Christian education from which guiding principles and guidelines for practice can be drawn. Christian educators who are evangelical in theological orientation need to make a concerted effort to affirm the biblical insights that provide the essential authority for theory and practice.<sup>2</sup> Christians also need to incorporate insights from other disciplines.

1. Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995); for a discussion of the postmodern setting, see the two appendixes of this work.

2. Evangelical educators have made major contributions in this area. See the following works as examples: Michael J. Anthony, ed., *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a New Generation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992); Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Ronald Habermas and Klaus Issler, *Teaching for Reconciliation: Foundations and Practice of*

Such incorporation, however, is subject to the continuing authority of God's Word as found in Scripture. By critically exploring the various foundations that have been and are predominant in Christian thought, educators can better deal with current needs and future challenges.

Christian educators have been conscious of the need to balance concerns for both continuity and change. Continuity is affirmed in emphasizing essential biblical truths that have guided the Christian faith and educational ministries throughout the centuries. Change is affirmed in emphasizing the need for applying theological truths in relation to specific historical, cultural, social, and personal variables. This effort requires careful reappraisal of biblical and theological sources, as well as evaluation of the various trends that are confronting the wider society and world.

In exploring these areas, it is appropriate to pose questions that have continuing significance in Christian education. A European educator once confronted an educator from the United States with the observation that "American educators are always raising questions and never answering them." In response to this remark, the educator from the United States asked yet another question, "Is that so?" To avoid this real danger, we must propose possible answers to the questions that are raised for consideration.

It is crucial that foundational questions be raised by Christian educators before they form a set theory and practice of Christian education. Raising these questions enables Christian educators to explore new possibilities and to consider "new wineskins" for Christian education. Through such exploration, persons concerned with education in various settings can identify principles and implications for practice.<sup>3</sup> The process by which various educational questions are raised in relation to foundations, principles, and practice is suggested by Denis Lawton, who outlines these areas in relation to a systems diagram (see fig. 1).<sup>4</sup>

At each point in the process, thought and practice are subject to the continuing authority of God's written Word. The Bible is a critical instrument that discerns and judges the educator, the educatee, and the educational process.<sup>5</sup> By exploring biblical and theological foundations first, Christian educators can affirm transcultural universals that may then guide all

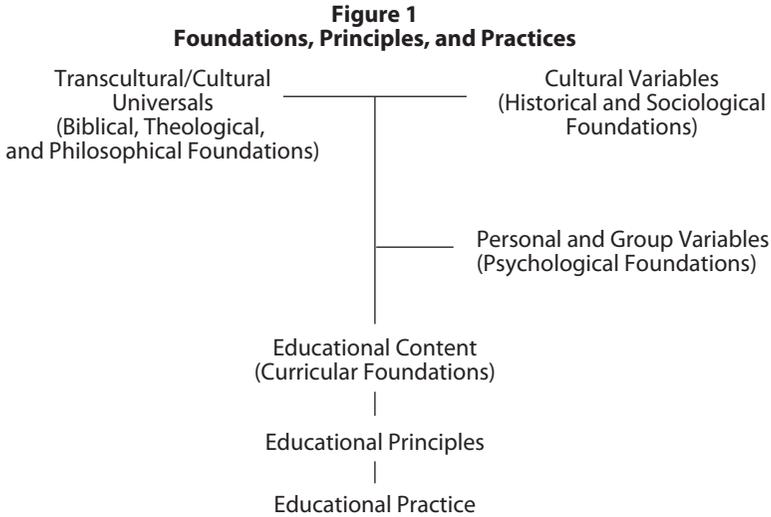
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*Christian Education Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); and Jim Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

3. For insights into the division of foundations, principles, and practices, see Émile Durkheim, *Education and Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1956).

4. Denis Lawton, *Class, Culture, and Curriculum* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 85–87.

5. Hebrews 4:12 and 2 Timothy 3:16 affirm this critical and evaluative function of God's written Word.



educational conceptions and efforts. The consideration of biblical and theological foundations can also serve to identify distinctive assumptions that Christians bring to their thought and practice of education. The consideration of philosophical foundations also assists the educator in specifying cultural universals in the purposes of education and the nature of knowledge. Transcultural and cultural universals are elements of continuity, less subject to change and various contingencies, though not exempt from interpretation in each educational setting.

The second step in the educational process involves the investigation of cultural variables through the disciplines of history and sociology, or anthropology. This step provides the Christian educator with a sense of his or her location in time and space. Cultural variables give the educator a sense of context, though cultural variables are more subject to the variations of time and space. Yet these cultural and subcultural variables are no less the concern of the Christian educator who seeks to contextualize her or his educational efforts. Thus the Christian educator endeavors to make the universal and transcultural truths of God's revelation real to those participating in the educational event. The educator seeks to so know, understand, and love students that her or his teaching speaks directly to the students' needs and concerns. This, of course, does not exclude the educator's role as one who raises critical questions and provides perspectives unknown to the students. But some sense of one's location in time, space, and society is crucial for faithful educational practice.

Beyond the questions of cultural universals and variables, the educator is confronted with individuals to whom she or he is responsible. The Christian educator needs to consider psychological foundations in order to discern the personal and group variables that influence education. In particular, the students or those being educated who are present and involved, voluntarily or involuntarily, must be considered. Also, educators are responsible to parents, administrators, boards, peers, pastors, and a host of other persons and groups, depending on the context of service. Psychological foundations provide insights to understand how persons develop, learn, and interact with others. Insights are also derived from sociological foundations for understanding how the teacher herself or himself relates and interacts with a variety of other persons, groups, and structures endemic to educational settings, whether in the home, the school, the church, or the community. The impact of sociological factors on psychological foundations indicates the interactions of the various dimensions of the educational process, as well as the potential limitations of a strictly systemic or analytical view of education. The diagramming of the system and process in figure 1 should include several connecting lines between each of the steps to reflect the complexity of the relationships. Additional lines could also be drawn to note the feedback from actual educational practices to the various foundations and their issues.

An additional step in the proposed model involves questions of educational content, the organized knowledge shared in Christian education. This step identifies the Christian heritage that will be shared with the persons and groups assembled. This living heritage draws on sources from the various foundations already identified in the model to form a curriculum. Curricular concerns at this point are organization of knowledge and identification of values and skills to be passed on from one generation or group to the next. In our current situation, questions of curriculum include the exposure of students to new knowledge and skills required for participation in a rapidly changing society. The inclusion of computer competency units in elementary and secondary schools is one example of curricular concern, given the impact of technology. Another curricular concern is the need for biblical and theological literacy in the Christian community.

Finally, the Christian educator needs to state educational principles that have been culled from the various foundations and then apply those principles to actual educational practices. A careful exploration of foundations is essential before one can specify principles and guidelines for practice. Too often, foundational questions have been ignored or the answers to such questions have been assumed in addressing the tyranny of urgent pressures in churches,

homes, schools, and other ministry settings. While these fifth and sixth steps are not the focus of this text, suggestions are made in these areas for the reader's consideration.<sup>6</sup>

The entire educational process, though discussed in terms of a system, is subject to numerous contingencies that suggest Christian education combines aspects of an art, as well as of a science. The Christian educator is called upon to creatively combine and integrate insights from various disciplines in the thought and practice of education. This artful integration includes disciplines beyond those identified in this book as foundations for Christian education. Educational thought and practice have incorporated insights from such diverse studies as fine and applied arts, economics, political science, life sciences, physical sciences, systems theory, management theory, engineering, and mathematics. This reality supports the proposition that all truth is God's truth. The Christian educator can incorporate God's truth wherever it may be revealed in the created world in ways that reflect on humanity's God-given creativity.

In discussing Christian education, one readily becomes conscious of its "preparadigmatic" character.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Kuhn has suggested this term to describe an area of study or academic discipline that has not developed a paradigm—a dominant and widely accepted understanding, framework, or concept that serves to guide all thought and practice. In the physical and biological sciences, it is possible to identify dominant paradigms.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the social sciences and education, it is more difficult to identify a dominant paradigm that guides *all* thought and practice, in part because the subjects for study in the social sciences and education are human beings. Human beings are infinitely more complex than physical, chemical, and biological processes. From a Christian theistic perspective, one can also affirm this complexity because persons are created in the very image of God. Each person is unique, and exceptions can be cited for any given paradigm or model.

This preparadigmatic stage of Christian education, which by virtue of persons' created nature may be a perennial one, implies that any educational

6. For a focus on steps 5 and 6, see Robert W. Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (1992; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), which is a companion volume to this work.

7. Robert A. Drov Dahl has raised appropriate questions about characterizing Christian education as preparadigmatic. See "Toward a Paradigmatic Christian Education," *Christian Education Journal* 11 (Spring 1991): 7–16. From my perspective, his pursuit of settledness and a paradigm may limit the place of freedom and creativity, but his pursuit of a framework for Christian education is to be affirmed. The pursuit of a framework and form results in an educational approach rather than a paradigm.

8. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 10–51.

conception or practice remains incomplete and subject to renewal and change. This is due in part to the nature of persons with their unlimited potential for good as well as evil. The realization of this potential depends on the Christian educator's relationship with God and the extent to which he or she follows God in educational thought and practice. Thus a major challenge facing Christian educators is to be faithful, obedient, and creative in their thought and practice. By drawing on various resources, Christian educators are further challenged to develop an integrated understanding of Christian education that will guide practice. To ignore this challenge is to potentially be victimized by a mindless effort that fails to give glory to God. An affirmation of the preparadigmatic character of Christian education also acknowledges the creation of space for the surprising and gracious work of the Holy Spirit in any educational approach or design.

The preparadigmatic stage of Christian education requires that each new generation of Christian educators reconsider the foundational questions. Without raising these questions, Christian educators are likely to perpetuate antiquated conceptions and practices that are not faithful to the gospel; to be captive to a culture devoid of significant impact; and to be unresponsive to what the Holy Spirit is saying. Whereas this task is the particular responsibility of those professionally called to Christian education at various levels, the people of God as a whole must recognize their accountability for the direction and quality of Christian education in churches, homes, schools, communities, and societies. A lack of commitment to foundational issues results in limited possibilities for present and future generations.

The chapters in this book are organized to suggest a relationship in the order of the educational foundations as they appear in pairs. In an evangelical tradition, priority is given to the biblical and theological foundations as they provide normative categories for the theory and practice of education. These foundations are discussed in chapters 1 and 2. The philosophical and historical foundations, explored in chapters 3 and 4, are also often paired because their mutuality and complementarity support the task of integration in forming an understanding and appreciation of educational practice within distinct contexts. This is the case because philosophies and histories vary over time and place, and conjoint study fosters the discovery of connections. Also, both sociological and psychological foundations, the topics of chapters 5 and 6, are linked as social sciences that have been readily drawn upon in the field of education. Their interrelationship is noted in the discussion of a systems analysis of the various foundations. Finally, curricular foundations in chapter 7 serve as a bridge from wrestling with foundational issues to applying the actual principles for and practices of education. Additional relationships

can be suggested to weave together the various foundational issues explored here, but these vary with the educational approach and rationale embraced by Christian educators.

The rationale for the first and subsequent editions of this book is captured in the wisdom shared by the Jewish educator Abraham J. Heschel, who said, “Thinking without roots will bear flowers but no fruits.”<sup>9</sup> Christians must think about Christian education if they are to faithfully bear fruit in their practice. The consideration of the roots of Christian education calls for careful attention to the foundations that we draw upon. A good theory that emerges from grappling with foundational issues will well serve those engaged in the practice of Christian education in a wide variety of settings. A good theory enables those who teach to see, analyze, and respond to educational tasks in creative and faithful ways.

This work is written from a bicultural North American Hispanic perspective. The author is also an ecumenical evangelical Christian in theological persuasion. For many this may pose an irreconcilable tension. First, Hispanics have generally been associated with Central and South America and the Caribbean rather than with North America.<sup>10</sup> Second, ecumenical Christians are generally viewed as not being those who identify themselves as evangelical. Nevertheless, it is from the ecumenical vantage point that I address the current and enduring challenges of Christian education. My distinctive identity and perspective have enabled me to draw from diverse sources in my thought and practice.

This work is intended to be an introductory textbook for upper-level college and seminary courses. Its approach draws heavily on secondary sources to provide a wide exposure for students. My hope is that students will be encouraged to explore the references provided for further study. Although the primary audiences for this work are persons of evangelical persuasion, it is also intended to engage the wider ecumenical community of religious educators.

I wish to thank those communities and individuals who have made this book possible through their nurture and those who have used the first and second editions. I am grateful to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, which I have known both as a student and as a faculty member for five years. The students in the courses I have taught have challenged me to consider various

9. Samuel H. Dresner, ed., *I Asked for Wonder: A Spiritual Anthology, Abraham Joshua Heschel* (New York: Crossword, 1995), 83.

10. For a discussion of the Hispanic heritage and developments in Latin America as related to Christian education, see Robert W. Pazmiño, *Latin American Journey: Insights for Christian Education in North America* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

aspects of Christian education and to develop my thoughts. I am also grateful to Andover Newton Theological School, which has supported my calling to serve a multicultural and theologically diverse church and world over these past twenty years. I also appreciate the fellowships and congregations that have supported and guided me throughout my ministry.

I am indebted to the friends who patiently typed and edited the original manuscript and those colleagues who fostered the process of writing through their feedback and reviews. In particular, I thank Virginia Steadman and Deborah Perkins for their service on earlier editions.

My greatest appreciation goes to my family, immediate and extended, who have loved and encouraged me in the midst of my work. My parents, Laura and Albert Pazmiño, always believed in me and modeled the Christian life. My children, David and Rebekah by birth and Larisa by marriage, along with my grandson, Oliver, have always challenged me to be a better teacher and model in our home. Finally, I thank my wife, Wanda, for being a close companion and friend throughout the joys and struggles of my pilgrimage.

### A Note on the Third Edition

Foundational issues in Christian education are raised in the changing contours of societal landscapes. Since the writing of the second edition of this work, postmodernism has emerged as a movement influencing educational thought and practices. The appendix to the second edition subtitled “Proclaiming Truth in a Postmodern Setting” noted one part of a Christian response to postmodern trends in emphasizing the search for truth that undergirds all educational efforts. The appendix to a subsequent work, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education*,<sup>11</sup> noted the other part of a Christian response in emphasizing the stance of love. This second appendix was titled “Crossing Over to Postmodernity: Educational Invitations.” (Both appendixes are included in this third edition.) The holistic Christian response calls for living and speaking the truth in love. This third edition of *Foundational Issues* reexamines the roots of Christian thinking on education, honoring a second nugget of wisdom penned by Abraham Heschel: “Religion begins with a question and theology with a problem.”<sup>12</sup> This third edition explores

11. Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

12. Reuven Kimelman, “Abraham Joshua Heschel: Our Generation’s Teacher in Honor of the Tenth Yearzeit,” *Religion and Intellectual Life* 2 (Winter 1985): 17.

educational questions and problems from the perspective of the Christian faith. Postmodernism emerges as an additional educational philosophy or impulse noted in chapter 3. Despite the questions that postmodernism raises about the possibility of enduring foundations, the examination of the roots of educational thoughts and practices is essential. Such reexamination in this third edition honors the distinctive elements of Christian revelation and faith while actively engaging the task of loving God with all of our minds. This is the responsibility and privilege of all Christians who teach today and in the years to come. Each chapter of this third edition was updated, clarified, and reviewed in the process of reexamining foundational issues while maintaining the basic structure of earlier editions. Each chapter includes questions for personal reflection or classroom use under “Points to Ponder.”

# 1

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## Biblical Foundations

To think responsibly about and practice education from a distinctly evangelical theological position, Christians, and in particular Christian educators, must carefully examine the biblical foundations for Christian education. Scripture is the essential source for understanding distinctively Christian elements in education. Therefore, it is crucial that the Christian educator's thoughts and practices be guided by God's revealed truths as he or she seeks to be obedient to Christ in the task of education. Christians are subject to a confusing plurality of educational theories in contemporary society. In such a situation, the exploration of biblical foundations provides an essential standard for judging education. The examination of these foundations does not result in a sterile or rigid theory and practice, devoid of diversity and creativity. Rather, Christian education patterned on biblical foundations provides for a dynamic and diverse educational experience.

Several foundations can be identified in both the Old and the New Testaments. These biblical sources provide models or approaches even at the basic level of a commonsense reading of the text. All educators have models or approaches that guide their thought and practice. In most cases, these models remain unexamined. The challenge for Christians is to examine their models for education, to make them explicit, and to undergird them with biblical foundations. The models suggested by various biblical foundations provide guides with which to consider past, present, and future educational efforts. What follows is a sampling of foundations that must be elaborated by educators in various settings, making use of more extensive critical, canonical, and contextual studies.<sup>1</sup>

1. Gabriel Fackre in *The Christian Story: A Pastoral Systematics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 157–210, identifies four senses of Scripture: common, critical, canonical, and

## The Old Testament

The Old Testament provides a wide variety of historical and communal settings in which to explore the nature of teaching and learning within the faith community. The work of the Latin American educator Matías Preiswerk is particularly insightful in identifying the various agents who were engaged in education. They included prophets, priests and Levites, wise persons or sages, scribes and rabbis, along with the people themselves as a nation. Each educational agent had a distinct purpose, content, method, and institutional expression as summarized in table 1 below.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 1  
**Education in the Old Testament**  
*Focus on the Educational Agents*

	People Nation	Prophet	Priest Levites	“The Wise” Wise Persons Sage	Scribe-Teacher Rabbi “Doctor of the Law”
Purpose	Popular Liberation	Realize Liberation	Transmit the Tradition	A Better Life	Interpret the Sacred Scriptures (Ezra 7:6, 10)
Content	Historical Events	Anticipatory Historical Perspectives	Religious Practices Laws	Advice for Daily Living	Theological Commentaries
Method	Memory Popular Culture	Word Symbolic Actions	The Torah: Its Celebration, Transmission, Explanation, and Application	Popular Wisdom	Instruction
Institution	Nation Itself Community	Schools of Prophets	The Temple	Occasionally the Court of King, Queen	Synagogue

Beyond this summary, it is instructive to consider the particular emphases in major portions of the Hebrew Scripture, or Old Testament. The book of Deuteronomy stresses passing on the basic content and norms essential for the

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contextual. This discussion is largely limited to the common sense, recognizing that evangelical constituencies make varied use of critical, canonical, and contextual insights. For further inquiry in this area, see Mary C. Boys, *Biblical Interpretation in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1980); for a good example of the fruits of canonical work, see Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

2. See Matías Preiswerk, *Educating in the Living Word: A Theoretical Framework for Christian Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 50–66.

life of the faith community. Walter Brueggemann identifies this component of the Old Testament canon as the ethos of the Torah, the disclosure of that which is binding upon the faith community.<sup>3</sup> In the Christian faith community, the evangelical heritage has stressed the transmission of these basics. Instruction in traditional and accepted ways or heritage provides continuity across the generations, especially in times of transition and change.<sup>4</sup> The transformation made possible by the recovery of this heritage is described in Psalm 78 and the book of Nehemiah. New life and joy are experienced by the entire nation in returning to the source of their faith. The Wisdom literature embodies how the norms of faith relate to particular questions and issues of the day. Wisdom is required to relate faith demands to particular contexts. The counsel of wise persons guides the connection of faith to life. Brueggemann identifies this component of the Old Testament canon as *logos*, the discernment of practical wisdom for life that provides meaning and order.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the words of the prophets explore the social dimension of faith and decry breaches in faithfulness both within and beyond the faith community. The prophets are the social educators of their times, and they disclose the passion of God with their timely words that confront and hopefully heal the nation and its leaders. Brueggemann calls this portion of the canon *pathos*, which brings disruption to the life of the faith community or nation in the service of justice and righteousness.<sup>6</sup> One additional element identified and not emphasized by Brueggemann, but of significance for the formation of faith, is the place of doxology, the place of praise and joy that denotes the embrace of believers by God and their embrace of God.<sup>7</sup> Each of these portions of Scripture is instructive for educational thought and practice in contemporary contexts.

### *The Book of Deuteronomy*

Within the Torah, the book of Deuteronomy stands out as one that outlines the norms for the faith community to follow and teach to the rising generations. In Deuteronomy 6:1–2, 4–9, Moses is described as exhorting the people of Israel to remember God’s activities in their history, to teach God’s commands, and, above all, to love, fear, and serve God:

3. Brueggemann, *Creative Word*, 13, 108. He uses Jeremiah 18:18 as the key text for his analysis of the Old Testament canon.

4. The stress on the norms of orthodoxy is one distinctive of evangelical Christians. Other distinctives are explored in chap. 2.

5. Brueggemann, *Creative Word*, 13, 108–9.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 117.

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Moses's teaching called the believing community to relate their faith in God to all of life. This passage from Deuteronomy provides insights about the goals, the teacher, the student, the content, and the setting of biblical education.<sup>8</sup>

The educational mandate of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 requires passing on the commandments of God to the next generation. Its ultimate goal is to foster the love of God expressed in loyalty and obedience. To love God is to answer to a unique claim (6:4), to be obedient (11:1–22; 30:20), to keep God's commandments (10:12; 11:1, 22; 19:9), to heed them and to hear God's voice (11:13; 30:16), and to serve (10:12; 11:1, 13). In each of these passages, the word *love* refers to obedience from the heart involving all of one's being.<sup>9</sup> Jesus echoes this relationship between love and obedience in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

The love of God is expressed in obedience to God's commandments and in giving oneself wholly (heart, soul, mind, and strength). Teaching is to be incisive in challenging hearers to such a total life response to God characterized by heartfelt devotion. This teaching was the particular responsibility of parents, yet this goal has significance for all forms of education.

In the ultimate sense, God is the teacher in biblical education. God is the author and discloser of all truth, and both teachers and students alike stand under this truth. God calls teachers and students to understand, grow in, and obey God's revealed Word. In this passage and throughout the biblical record, teachers are responsible as stewards and proclaimers of God's truth. This truth can be communicated in a variety of ways, always involving a relational dimension. A relationship of love, trust, openness, honesty, acceptance, caring, support,

8. For these insights, I am indebted to the work of Timothy C. Tennent, "Personal Philosophy of Christian Education" (unpublished student paper, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1984).

9. *Ibid.*

forgiveness, correction, and affirmation is to characterize interactions between teachers and students.<sup>10</sup> Teachers, like parents, are called upon to model the love of God, which they hope to encourage students to follow.

Through the teaching and example of the teacher, the student is called to understanding, growth, and obedience in relation to God's revealed Word. While the teacher is encouraged to diligently and incisively teach, it is assumed that the student will be open and willing to receive this instruction. Other passages of Scripture, in particular the book of Proverbs, provide clear injunctions for children to be attentive to the instruction of their parents. The teachers in the context of Jewish life were primarily the parents, and Deuteronomy 6 therefore focuses on this primary role. But this perspective has implications for other educational relationships beyond the home, as was the case in postexilic synagogue schools.

The essential content of biblical education in Deuteronomy 6 is the commandments, decrees, and laws of God that Moses was directed to teach. But this content is vitally related to the whole of life. The content of God's revelation is to be taught or impressed upon students, to be talked about at various times, to be tied and bound upon one's body, and to be written in public and readily observed locations. Truth is to be integrated into all of life and is to affect the moment-to-moment and day-to-day existence of the people of God. This content is both foundational and radical. It is foundational in providing the basic truth and structure on which all else must be built. It is radical in providing the roots from which all life is nourished or affected. Thus both stability and growth are assured to the extent that the content of education is based on God's revelation.

The setting for teaching described in this passage includes all those situations in which parents can impress upon their children the commandments of God. There are various occasions when this is to be done: when sitting at home, when walking along the road, when lying down, and when getting up. God's commandments are to be present even as symbols on people's hands and foreheads and the doorframes of houses and gates. The whole of life provides situations in which persons can be disciplined and nurtured in the ways of God, recognizing that God is the ultimate teacher for humanity.

The primary focus in Deuteronomy 6 is parents and their essential role in education. Despite the multiplicity of educational influences today, parents are still the primary educators who actively or passively determine what influences their children. The challenge is for the Christian church to equip parents for

10. Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 314.

their roles as ministers and educators in their homes and to assist them in the choice of other educational influences in the lives of their children. Parents need the support and guidance of leaders in their faith communities.

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses exhorts the people of Israel to remember and to teach. The context for this teaching is the home, in which persons learn to relate their faith in God to all of life. Because of the contemporary tendency to compartmentalize life, faith is often relegated to those limited occasions when one is involved in church-related activities, typically confined to a few hours on Sunday mornings. The book of Deuteronomy demonstrates that faith in God is related to all of life. Wherever faithful persons interact, there is an occasion for Christian education—provided this interaction is deliberate, systematic, and sustained.<sup>11</sup>

Education entails conscious planning, implementing, and evaluating of educational experiences. Intentionality in Christian education involves the effort to share biblical content, to grapple with its implications for life, and to suggest avenues for appropriate response. A similar point is emphasized in James 2:14–17. This approach has been advocated by Lawrence O. Richards, whose conceptions have clarified the place of nonformal and informal aspects of education.<sup>12</sup> Richards largely depends on a socialization or enculturation model for education that focuses on education for life.<sup>13</sup>

Richards assumes that the values of formal education will be implicitly addressed in the Christian community; however, it is clear that these values must be planned in educational ministries that enable persons to move beyond a community norm, in a prophetic sense, as well as nurturing them in the ways of a particular community. Prophetic education calls persons and communities to be accountable to biblical norms and demands at points where sin, injustice, and oppression are evident, where the life of the home or nurturing community is critiqued rather than affirmed. These two foci—affirmation and critique—are patterned after the blessings and warnings of God’s covenant (see Deuteronomy 27–28) with all humanity. These foci are implied in Deuteronomy 6, which emphasizes attentiveness to God’s commands and parental instruction.

Affirmation and critique are as essential in today’s contexts as they were in biblical times. Thus, while a family or community may faithfully pass on to

11. These terms for describing education are explored in chap. 3 when the definition of education is considered. See also Lawrence A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 134–45.

12. For a complete discussion of the content-implications-response sequence, see Lawrence O. Richards, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1970).

13. Richards’s conceptions are elaborated in his *Theology of Christian Education*.

the next generation the truth of God through its socialization and enculturation processes, this transmission may also at key points need correction and reorientation. Formal education can often serve as a vehicle for correction and reorientation of the efforts of a particular home or community. Likewise, a particular home or community may minister to an agency of formal education, such as when parents take an active role in the policies and goals of a Sunday, private, or public school.

Deuteronomy 30–32 also provides essential insights for understanding the nature of Christian education. Jesus himself is reported to have made repeated reference to the book of Deuteronomy during his wilderness temptations.<sup>14</sup> In the current educational wilderness of a plurality of educational philosophies, Christian educators can likewise gain strength and clarity by considering the insights offered from the following three passages in Deuteronomy: 30:11–20; 31:9–13; and 31:30–32:4. The education described in these passages comes to its full fruition in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

*Deuteronomy 30:11–20: Finding Life.* Deuteronomy 30:11–20 clarifies some of the issues at stake in current Christian education efforts. This passage records a covenant renewal challenge given to the people of Israel and describes the curses or warnings that result from disobedience of God:

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

14. See Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13.

Christian educators are to make clear God's offer of life or death. Christian education is one of the church's ministries that seek to encourage persons of all ages to choose life—the spiritual life found in Jesus Christ for the Christian church. Choosing life requires loving, listening to, and holding fast to God. This choice is imperative because God is the source of life, a truth echoed in 1 John 5:12: “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” Christian education entails sharing knowledge of and encouraging a response to God that results in life.

*Deuteronomy 31:9–13: The Word of God and Human Response.* Deuteronomy 31:9–13 emphasizes the importance of reading and hearing God's Law. This passage records the sabbatical legal renewal of God's covenant with God's people:

So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them: “At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read the law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

Those addressed are to listen, learn to reverence God, and follow carefully in God's ways. God's Law is a trust, a heritage that is to be shared not only with adults but also with children and youth in the community of faith. These formal and legal arrangements are finally fulfilled and transcended in the new covenant. From the perspective of the New Testament, the importance of God's Law is extended to all of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:14–17). God's Word provides the essential content for teaching. Christian education can be further distinguished by the focus on God's revelation as expressed in the Old and New Testaments. God's Word is to be passed on from generation to generation with the intent of fostering a response of faithfulness on the part of the hearers. The authority of God's Word is understood within the community of faith, the church of the living God, which is described as the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). With this understanding, educators must submit any private interpretations of Scripture to the shared wisdom of the church in both its historical and present expressions.

*Deuteronomy 31:30–32:4a: Fostering Liberation and Facilitating Worship.* Deuteronomy 31:30–32:4a provides a description of education in Old

Testament times. This passage is an unusual introduction to a long poetic curse upon the nation that is followed by the promise of restoration:

And Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel:

Listen, O heavens and I will speak;  
 hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.  
 Let my teaching fall like rain  
     and my words descend like dew,  
 like showers on new grass,  
     like abundant rain on tender plants.  
 I will proclaim the name of the LORD.  
     Oh, praise the greatness of our God!  
 He is the Rock, his words are perfect,  
     and all his ways are just.

This passage describes an education that liberates persons to grow and be refreshed in God. It is also an education that encourages them to celebrate, to attribute worth to God. It liberates in the sense of enabling persons to be and become all that God has intended them to be as God's creatures and as members of the covenant community. The threat of curse along with the anticipation of blessing were opportunities for learning. Such a liberating education requires the effectual working of God to restore persons and groups so that they can reflect God's image in their lives, just as rain and dew restore and renew plant life in a desert. Liberation is the empowerment to be and become all that God intended persons to be by the Creator's continual care and transformation of individuals, communities, and societies.<sup>15</sup> This liberation includes the denouncement of sin, along with the announcement of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christian education is characterized by teaching and learning that result in the liberation of persons. Jesus affirms this emphasis in John 8:31b–32: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The education described in Deuteronomy 31:30–32:4a also entails celebration. It is celebration in the sense of encouraging participants to praise, adore, and glorify God. God is praised for God's gracious activity, care, providence, judgment, justice, and righteousness. Participants in this educational event are called by Moses to recognize their utter dependence on God and to respond with obedience to divine demands in all spheres of human activity.

15. See Exodus 6:6–8 for a description of liberation as God worked in the life experience of the nation of Israel.

Therefore, in addition to liberation, celebration is an outcome of education that is biblical in character.

The life and ministry of Jesus is the fullest expression of the nature of education described in these passages from Deuteronomy. Christ is the life, the Word Incarnate, and the ultimate source for liberation and celebration. Jesus Christ is the life (John 14:6), the bread of life (John 6:35), and the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). He comes to offer everlasting life to all who believe in him (John 3:16, 36; 1 John 5:12). Jesus Christ as the Word Incarnate (John 1:1–18) fulfills God’s Law (Matt. 5:17–20). In Christ there is the fullest realization of liberation (John 8:31–36) and the occasion for celebration (John 15:9–11). His discipling ministry with the twelve disciples provides a model for the kind of education that affects the total life of participants.<sup>16</sup> More than just imparting content as revealed truth, Jesus shared his very life with his disciples as the Word Incarnate. This sharing of life then issues in life for those who respond in faith to God’s disclosure.

What possible educational implications can be drawn from consideration of these biblical foundations from the book of Deuteronomy?<sup>17</sup> Several can be suggested in relation to the need for reform in local church education using the categories suggested above. Other implications might be suggested in relation to education in various settings, but our focus is on the implications as they relate to the local church. Such implications emerge from a common-sense reading of the Scripture that must be evaluated in relation to the other foundational considerations explored in subsequent chapters of this work.

From Deuteronomy 30:11–20—“Finding Life”—the following implications can be suggested:

1. Reemphasize the evangelistic functions of Sunday school and other educational programs of the local church.

16. For an insightful description of Jesus’s teaching ministry, see these classic works: A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971); and Herman H. Horne, *The Teaching Techniques of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1920). A more recent work is Joseph A. Grassi, *Teaching the Way: Jesus, the Early Church, and Today* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982).

17. One can raise the question of how one moves from biblical texts to educational or ministerial implications. This assumes that educators are dealing with the authority for teaching, which is the subject of Robert W. Pazmiño, *By What Authority Do We Teach? Sources for Empowering Christian Educators* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002). But, basically, in moving from biblical texts to implications, one moves through one’s experiences and reflections as prayerfully enlightened by the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the texts. In this process, one interacts with the experiences and reflections of other Christians, but no easy formula exists for such a journey to acquire wisdom, which is a lifelong task. Teaching becomes incarnated as truth through the person of the teacher.

2. Train Sunday school teachers and adult participants in areas of evangelization and follow-up.
3. Explore the possibilities of classes and Bible study groups geared to those inquiring about the Christian faith.
4. Pray for and anticipate decisions for a life commitment to Jesus Christ as Sovereign and Savior.

From Deuteronomy 31:9–13—“The Word of God and Human Response”—the following implications emerge:

1. Develop and work toward goals of biblical literacy for all age groups.
2. Evaluate and select curriculum that is Bible centered and comprehensive in dealing with the whole counsel of God.
3. Relate biblical themes to contemporary life and help students in all educational programs to grapple with the implications of biblical truth for their response in the world.

Deuteronomy 31:30–32:4—“Fostering Liberation and Facilitating Worship”—suggests the following implications:

1. Maximize the active participation of everyone in educational programs. Complement action with time for serious thought and reflection in dialogue with others.
2. Raise questions concerning distinctive Christian lifestyles in a pluralistic society. Ask, What does it mean to affirm Christ’s lordship in various areas of life?
3. Consciously rely on the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals, groups, and structures.
4. Work toward the coordination of education programs with the themes and emphases of weekly corporate worship.
5. Prepare children and youth for and expose them to corporate worship. Provide assistance for parents in this area of preparation.
6. Allow for spontaneous and planned occasions of worship during educational events.
7. Inquire about the spiritual growth of persons in your programs.

### *Psalm 78*

Psalm 78:1–8 is another key Old Testament passage providing insights for understanding the setting for covenant education. This passage speaks about the attention given to God’s activities in history on behalf of God’s creation and the redeemed community:

O my people, hear my teaching;  
 listen to the words of my mouth.  
 I will open my mouth in parables,  
 I will utter hidden things, things from of old—  
 what we have heard and known,  
 what our fathers have told us.  
 We will not hide them from their children;  
 we will tell the next generation  
 the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,  
 his power, and the wonders he has done.  
 He decreed statutes for Jacob  
 and established the law in Israel,  
 which he commanded our forefathers  
 to teach their children,  
 so the next generation would know them,  
 even the children yet to be born,  
 and they in turn would tell their children.  
 Then they would put their trust in God  
 and would not forget his deeds  
 but would keep his commands.  
 They would not be like their forefathers—  
 a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
 whose hearts were not loyal to God,  
 whose spirits were not faithful to him.

Wherever God's words and deeds are passed on to succeeding generations, a context for Christian education is formed. By necessity, intergenerational relationships must be present for this to occur. Both the Old and the New Testament communities have a shared memory or history. In rehearsing the accounts of God's activities in both distant and recent history, the meaning and purpose of life in God are shared. Followers of the living God are not to forget but rather should learn from the victories and failures of persons in the past. God's community is called to reflect on God's covenant and the responses of persons, groups, and communities that have resulted in both blessing and curse. Where this reflection and dialogue are facilitated is the place where the covenant can be renewed. Reflection depends on a faithful recounting of history, which emphasizes the need to explore historical foundations.

In Old Testament times, the family was the primary setting for education. The efforts of the family were supplemented and complemented by the instruction in the covenant community as it gathered. In exilic and postexilic times, the agencies of education expanded to include both synagogues and

schools.<sup>18</sup> Even with these developments, the extended family continued to be important in education.

In the New Testament, the church functions as the extended and adopted family of God. It is the responsibility of those so gifted and experienced to pass on to the next generation accounts of the acts, the power, and the wonders of God in the past and present. Those who are gifted and experienced have responsibilities as stewards to transmit this life-giving message to new members of the faith community. This transmission is crucial if persons are to gain a sense of rootedness and identity in relation to a faith community. Constant diligence is necessary to sustain this faithful transmission that also calls for interpretation.

### *Nehemiah 8:1–18*

Following the return of the exiles from captivity, Ezra reads the Law to the people (Neh. 8:1–18). Ezra's ministry is an instrument for renewal in the life of the community; those able to understand are assembled to hear God's Word.<sup>19</sup> The hearing and heeding of God's Word issues in the restoration of life and worship. The uniquely educational aspect of this event is the Levites' instruction of the people. They clarify the words of God so that the people can understand. When the people clearly see the implications of biblical teachings, they can then respond in ways that are pleasing to God. The tasks of education include enabling others to come to an understanding of God, divine revelation, and expectations for personal and corporate human life.

The responsibilities of the educators or teachers include: (1) *proclamation*, that is, the reading, speaking, or sharing of God's Word; (2) *exposition*, that is, the translation and explanation or opening up of the meaning of God's Word; and (3) *exhortation*, that is, the suggestion of direct application and response for those who hear.

The responsibilities of the hearers or students include the following: (1) *knowing* God's Word by listening attentively to its proclamation; (2) *understanding* God's Word by responding to its exposition; (3) *obeying* God's Word by responding wholeheartedly to its exhortation; and (4) *worshiping* God, who is encountered through the proclaimed Word, and celebrating the restoration realized in personal and corporate life.

18. For a full description of education in Old Testament times, see William Barclay, *Train Up a Child: Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 11–48.

19. Cf. Romans 10:14–18; see also the discussion of Ezra and Nehemiah in Robert W. Pazmiño, *Latin American Journey: Insights for Christian Education in North America* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 123–44.

In general, hearers or students are expected to have reverence for God's Word (the people stand while Ezra reads the book of the Law) and to respond at several levels, including one's thoughts, decisions, and affections. A response includes the intellect in terms of understanding, the will in terms of obedience, and the emotions in terms of repentance and worship. A call is made to set one's mind, will, heart, and affections upon God. Here is an example of education that goes beyond the immediate family situation to include the whole community and nation.

### *Wisdom Literature*

Crucial to understanding education from the perspective of the Old Testament is the concept of wisdom and, in particular, its embodiment in Wisdom literature. In the Hebrew worldview, wisdom was intensely practical, resulted in successful living, and applied to the heart. A special group of persons was endowed with the gift of wisdom and had the responsibility of sharing their advice with others. Their task was to develop workable plans and to prescribe advice for successful living (Jer. 18:18). But wisdom in its fullest sense was only to be understood in relation to its source, namely, God.<sup>20</sup> David H. Hubbard provides helpful insights in his description of wisdom:

Wisdom in the fullest sense belongs to God alone (Job 12:13ff.; Isa. 31:2; Dan. 2:20–23). His wisdom is not only completeness of knowledge pervading every realm of life (Job 10:4; 26:6; Prov. 5:21; 15:3) but also consists in his irresistible fulfillment of what he has in mind (J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, I–II, page 198). The universe (Prov. 3:19f.; 8:22–31; Jer. 10:12) and man (Job 10:8ff.; Ps. 104:24; Prov. 14:31; 22:2) are products of his creative wisdom. Natural (Isa. 28:23–29) and historical (Isa. 31:2) processes are governed by his wisdom, which includes an infallible discrimination between good and evil and is the basis for the just rewards and punishments which are the lot of the righteous and the wicked (Pss. 1, 37, 73; Prov. 10:3; 11:4; 12:2). Such wisdom is inscrutable (Job 28:12–21). God in his grace must reveal it if man is going to grasp it at all (Job 28:23, 28). Even wisdom derived from natural abilities or distilled from experience is a gracious gift, because God's creative activity makes such wisdom possible.

Biblical wisdom is both religious and practical. Stemming from the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10), it branches out to touch all of life. . . . Wisdom takes insights gleaned from the knowledge of God's ways and applies them in the daily walk. This combination of insight and obedience (and all insight must issue in obedience) relates wisdom to the prophetic emphasis

20. David H. Hubbard, "Wisdom," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 1333.

on the knowledge (i.e., the cordial love and obedience) of God (e.g., Hos. 2:20; 4:1, 6; 6:6; Jer. 4:22; 9:3, 6; and especially Prov. 9:10).<sup>21</sup>

What implications emerge from this Old Testament understanding of education? First, God imparts wisdom, and people are dependent on this grace for any claim to wisdom. Therefore, wisdom that is apart from or inconsistent with the truths of God's revelation must be suspect and questioned. Education at its best must be God-centered, seeing God as the source. Educators are called to integrate all areas of knowledge with God's revelation.

A second implication is that education should have an impact on people's lives and should enable them to grapple with the practical consequences of the truths studied or discerned. Therefore, the appeal to a strictly theoretical or academic agenda that addresses the mind divorced from affections and actions cannot claim to be faithful to the biblical tradition. Questions of character, ethics, and lifestyle are appropriate, along with how truth and commitment relate to all areas of life. Herein is the need for a holistic and integrated perspective on education that affects the head, heart, and hands of both teachers and students.

A third implication for education is that those who are identified as teachers must be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they give evidence of having received the gift of wisdom from God. Teachers are ultimately responsible to God for the use of their gifts and responsible to students in sharing the fruit of their insights. Approaches to education that exclusively emphasize student-directed learning may not provide adequate opportunities for a teacher's wisdom to be shared. The Wisdom literature affirms the need to contextualize norms that can speak to people where they live.<sup>22</sup>

### *Prophetic Literature*

The prophets are the social educators of their times who call the people, the leaders, and the nations to account for their ways. They express the passion of God for righteousness and justice in the land. Those within and outside the faith community are scrutinized for the values they espouse and live out in their lives. In response to the lack of faithful living, the prophets in their teaching bring a message of hope, anger, and courage that the great North African teacher Augustine described: "Hope has two lovely daughters, anger

21. Ibid.

22. For a discussion of wisdom in relation to education, see Peter C. Hodgson, *God's Wisdom: Toward a Theology of Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999); and Charles F. Melchert, *Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Educational Ministry* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998).

and courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they need not remain as they are.”<sup>23</sup> The prophets’ teachings provide hope for those who are oppressed as they express God’s anger at human sin, as suggested by Isaiah’s words: “The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught” (50:4). After listening to God, the prophets teach with courageous words, declaring the alternatives to the current situation.

As outlined by Ezekiel, the Levites have a distinctive role in teaching the people the ways of the Lord: “They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (44:23). Whereas the Levites’ teaching may be primarily applicable to personal, familial, and religious or cultic ethics, the prophets’ role is to set an agenda for the nation in the public sphere as well as the area of social ethics. This is modeled in the message of Micah: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (6:8). The works of justice, righteousness, and mercy encompass all of life and include the social, economic, and political spheres. The prophets speak of God’s values for all of life that bring human efforts under judgment and disrupt everyday patterns. God’s demands are made explicit in the teachings of the prophets, who pose choices for all their hearers, their students in the public arena.

The prophetic tradition suggests the need for Christian educators to grapple with the social, political, and economic implications of faith commitments. The prophets were commentators in their time who took risks in clearly outlining God’s demands. Prophetic teaching was not always welcomed, and a silencing of the prophets was one response to their teaching. One important consideration of the prophetic teacher in the present day is the manifestation of love in confronting hearers, realizing that care is required to confront others in their sinful and destructive ways.

## The New Testament

The New Testament, as was the case with the Hebrew Scripture, or Old Testament, provides a variety of insights regarding the tasks of teaching the

23. This quote, which may well be part of an oral tradition attributed to Augustine, is noted by Wilbert J. McKeachie, *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, 9th ed. (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath & Co., 1994), 384. This work is one that I wish I had read before teaching in higher education. It has many helpful suggestions.

faith. The Gospels and the Epistles set an agenda for the propagation of the Christian faith in what often was an alien or hostile setting. Jesus as a teacher had to contend with an unwelcome reception by many to what he was proclaiming. The facts of his incarnation, the threat to his life in Bethlehem, his rejection at Nazareth, and his crucifixion in Jerusalem all point to the risks and costs of teaching the truth in his time. These experiences of Jesus are explored in appendix A.<sup>24</sup> Christians in the first two centuries had similar challenges to their sharing the gospel. Much can be learned regarding education from a careful study of several New Testament teaching patterns, some of which are considered below. Kevin Giles points out in relation to the New Testament that every leader of the faith community was a teacher. Those leaders included apostles, prophets, bishops, deacons, elders, women, church members, and even children who were brought within Jesus's circle of teaching. The vision was for everyone to be teachers.<sup>25</sup> This was particularly the case for Matthew's Gospel, which served in many ways as both a teaching manual and curriculum.

### *Matthew: Sharing Vision, Mission, and Memory*

In the New Testament, the Old Testament patterns of education persist, but the followers of Jesus are provided with a new agenda for their educational efforts. This agenda is most explicit in Matthew 28:16–20. The purpose of the disciples' ministry is to enable other persons to become obedient disciples of Jesus Christ. This teaching of responsibility is for all who are disciples of Jesus. It is a difficult task to teach obedience. Those who have taught others can appreciate this difficulty. Yet there is the promise that Christ's very presence, as well as his authority, will empower his disciples to disciple others, be it in the home, the church, the classroom, or the wider community. The purpose of making disciples is totally dependent on sharing the content of Jesus's own teachings, those truths revealed by God with direct implications for life. The challenge posed for current efforts in Christian education is this question: Are obedient disciples of Jesus Christ being nurtured and taught all that Jesus taught? If so, there is a basis for affirmation and continued reliance on God's gracious undertaking. If not, there is a challenge for careful evaluation and renewed efforts.

24. See also the forthcoming work: Robert W. Pazmiño, *So What Makes Our Teaching Christian? Teaching in the Name, Spirit, and Power of Jesus* (2008). This book explores insights from Jesus's teaching in the Gospel of John particularly with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman known as Photini and the apostles' teaching in the book of Acts.

25. Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians* (Melbourne, Australia: Collins Dove, 1989), 114–18.

In addition to this educational commission, the pattern of instruction in Matthew's Gospel shows how teaching was conducted in the early church. Matthew's Gospel is a teaching manual for discipling Christians. Jesus's teaching is organized into blocks of instruction that provide a curricular guide for the emerging Christian church. The five major teaching sections of instruction include the following: 5:1–7:27; 10:1–42; 13:1–52; 18:1–35; 23:1–25:46. These sections address major areas of Christian life.<sup>26</sup> They can be categorized in terms of three elements that a Christian community shares with its members, namely, a vision, a mission, and a memory.

The first teaching section is the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–7:27). This passage contains Jesus's teaching on the personal and social ethics of the kingdom. It provides a vision for participation in God's kingdom.

Matthew 10:1–42 records Jesus's charge to the twelve disciples, outlining his teaching on mission. Jesus sends out his disciples as an extension of his own ministry with specific directives to guide their ministries.

The third teaching section (Matt. 13:1–52) includes the parables of the kingdom, in which Jesus teaches about redemptive history and provides insights for discerning the nature of the kingdom itself. The kingdom has small beginnings but grows in the midst of an evil world. This history of the kingdom provides a framework for understanding past, current, and future developments in the mission of the kingdom.

Matthew 18:1–35 contains Jesus's discourse on church discipline, in which he describes the nature of his disciples' commitments to one another in love and truth. This passage addresses the area of mission as related to a local body of disciples who are called to model a community of love, healing, reconciliation, and justice.

The final teaching section (Matt. 23:1–25:46) contains Jesus's teaching on eschatology. The happenings at the end of the present age with the inbreaking of the coming age of God's kingdom fulfilled on earth are described. Thus the focus is again on vision.

The New Testament model for Christian teaching, then, centers on the shared Christian vision, mission, and memory, as the followers of Jesus Christ seek to be faithful to God's calling in the world.

In relation to current educational efforts, Christians are called to evaluate the extent to which the Christian vision, the Christian mission, and the Christian memory are effectively shared. Such criteria provide standards for evaluating Christian education today. As was illustrated with Deuteronomy

26. Glenn W. Barker, William L. Lane, and J. Ramsey Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 264–66.

30–32, possible educational implications can be suggested for local church educational efforts based on the consideration of Matthew’s teaching model.

From the first element of education—sharing vision—the following implications for Christian educators can be identified:

1. Explicitly state, preferably in written form, their vision for God’s work in their specific locality.
2. Provide an extended period of time, perhaps in a retreat format, when persons involved in educational ministries can study biblical insights for education and can share their vision for ministry.
3. Periodically devote time to evaluate the implementation of a vision for a specific ministry and to reorient efforts.

From the second element of education—sharing mission—the following implications for Christian educators can be suggested:

1. Develop a statement of mission to guide educational work that identifies specific purposes and goals for long- and short-term periods.
2. Consider needs both within and outside of the immediate Christian community and biblical demands in considering mission. (Challenges in home and foreign missions cannot be neglected in focusing on local concerns.)
3. Delegate specific responsibilities and establish avenues of accountability for various components of mission implementation.
4. Evaluate existing programs and efforts in terms of an agreed-upon mission statement.
5. Periodically reconsider the mission statement in light of new challenges and changing situations.

The third element of education—sharing memory—suggests the following implications for Christian educators:

1. Plan times when the history of God’s work in a particular local church community and/or denomination can be recounted and celebrated.
2. Relate local history to the advance of God’s kingdom over the centuries.
3. Identify specific points of continuity and discontinuity with the past in relation to the present and future of the local church.
4. Include children, youth, and adults in exploring historical roots.

These implications are suggestive and serve to illustrate the value of exploring foundations for the actual practice of education in the setting of the local

church. Various other factors must be considered, but biblical models can be reappropriated and reinterpreted to provide helpful frameworks in which to conceptualize and practice Christian education. This approach is an alternative to the uncritical appropriation of dominant models current in society, which nevertheless can be considered for secondary insights.

*Luke: Methods from the Master Teacher*

Another passage of particular significance for a discussion of education, and of methods in particular, is Luke 24:13–35, in which Jesus talks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Key components of this teaching episode for consideration are discussion (v. 14), open inquiry (v. 17), correction and clarification (vv. 25–27), role modeling (vv. 30–31), and the need for response (vv. 33–35). Whereas this educational encounter includes the dimension of declaration as evidenced in Jesus's exposition of the Scriptures, it also includes the dimension of dialogue, which enables the disciples to be engaged not only at the level of their minds but also includes their affections, wills, and actions. Here is an educational encounter that calls for a head, heart, and hand response to the good news declared by Jesus.

Jesus's approach in interacting with these disciples includes three noteworthy elements. First, Jesus asks them questions (vv. 17–19). The Master Teacher knows the answers, yet he wants his students to think for themselves. Second, Jesus listens. He hears their response to the questions he asks. Teachers often fail to listen to students and to allow adequate time for thought. Third, it is only after questioning and listening that Jesus both exhorts these disciples and opens the Scriptures, explaining their meaning. Jesus explains the truths discussed by Moses and the Prophets through his interpretation of the texts. In response to Jesus's teaching, these disciples describe their encounter as one in which both their eyes and the Scriptures were opened. The word for "open" here is the same word used to describe how a womb is opened at the birth of a child. There is a sense of joy and the burning of the heart that parallels a birth experience in terms of its personal impact. The joy associated with such a disclosure is a desperately needed dimension in each and every Christian education endeavor.

In addition to this account of Jesus's teaching, the Gospels provide examples of the wide variety of methods that Jesus used in his teaching ministry.<sup>27</sup> James Stewart identifies some general principles and particular features of Jesus's methodology. The general principles are: Jesus's teaching was authoritative; Jesus trusted in the power of truth to convince his hearers; Jesus sought to have persons think for themselves; Jesus lived what he taught; and Jesus loved those he taught. The particular features are: Jesus's teaching was oral instruction; it

27. Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), provides a helpful categorization of the forms of Jesus's teaching. He points out that three important considerations in teaching include what is taught, who the teacher is, and how the teacher teaches.

was occasional in nature; it was elicited by quite casual events; it was adapted to his audience; and it included figurative elements such as illustrations, epigrams, paradoxes, and parables.<sup>28</sup> Christian educators are not limited to the oral instruction that Jesus employed but have access to a wide variety of media and methodologies. Nevertheless, the example of Jesus as the Master Teacher must be studied if one is to effectively and faithfully minister. In this study one must recognize the unique role and mission of Jesus's teaching.

### *1 Corinthians 2:6–16: Wisdom from the Holy Spirit*

Christian educators must consider the extensive teaching ministry of Paul in the first century. Paul's focus is wisdom from God, a wisdom whose source is the Holy Spirit. Paul teaches in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The reception of these words also requires the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the hearers. A person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit. Paul reflects the words of Jesus to his disciples: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26); "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit, whose responsibility is to teach the disciples of Christ all things and remind them of Jesus's teachings, equips the Christian teacher to effectively minister and releases the creativity necessary to appropriately share and understand Christian truths.

Effective teaching and learning require the continuing presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Teaching itself is described as one of the gifts bestowed on the church by Christ through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:27–31; Eph. 4:7–13; 1 Pet. 4:10–11). Teaching is not only a Spirit-endowed and motivated gift but also requires that the teacher be continually filled and guided by the Holy Spirit in the process of teaching (Eph. 4:29–32; 5:15–20). The spiritual dimensions of education are foundational in a New Testament perspective.

The wisdom from the Holy Spirit contrasts with the knowledge or wisdom from the world. This distinction is also explicit in James 3:13–18. In 1 Corinthians, Paul describes "a wisdom of this age" (2:6) and a knowledge that puffs up (8:1–3). In comparison, spiritual knowledge and wisdom are characterized

28. James D. Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.), 64–71. For a detailed exploration of these dimensions of Jesus's teaching, see Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (1992; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 124–32.

by a love that builds up or edifies. Knowledge easily breeds conceit, provides glib answers, and at best is incomplete. What matters more is spiritual wisdom expressed in a love that promotes the good of others and glorifies God. Paul prays that the Ephesians might know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (3:19). Paul does not denounce knowledge but sees it being transcended through the work of the Holy Spirit, making the love of Christ a reality.

From the experience of teaching a group of twelve to fifteen active fifth- and sixth-grade boys in East Harlem, New York City, the author can testify to the essential dimension of love shared both within and outside the classroom. Beyond any knowledge shared in the lessons, students have commented over the years on the glimpses of God's love seen during Saturday outings and service projects that extended scriptural lessons into everyday life.

### *Ephesians: Pattern and Purposes*

A general pattern of Paul's ministry as reflected in the book of Ephesians, but also in his other writings, is one that incorporates instruction, intercession, and exhortation.<sup>29</sup> Instruction consists of a focus on the content of Christian faith, on what God has done. Intercession is prayer for those instructed, with a conscious dependence on God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The third element of the pattern is exhortation. Paul specifies what believers are to be and do in light of God's activities and revelation in Christ.

In addition to this general pattern, Ephesians 4:7–16 provides specific insights for discerning the purposes of the teaching or educational ministries of the church. Teaching is a spiritual gift. The immediate purpose of teaching is the preparation of God's people for works of service within the church and the world. A truth of particular significance for the Christian church in the twenty-first century is the ministry of all believers. The sixteenth-century church affirmed the priesthood, and in some cases the prophethood, of all believers, which is now being understood in terms of a ministry that each believer possesses. All of God's people must be equipped, taught, and trained for their varied ministries, making use of the gifts God has bestowed on a covenant people.

Beyond this immediate purpose of preparation for works of service, there is an ultimate purpose for teaching, for educating. This ultimate purpose is

29. John Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 146. See also Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Paul Teaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Richard R. Osmer, *The Teaching Ministry of Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 3–56; for my discussion of Paul as teacher, see "Teachings of Paul," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 686–88.

the edification of the church. The gift of teaching is given so that the body of Christ, the church, might be built up. Whereas sanctification generally centers on the personal spiritual growth of an individual, edification centers on corporate spiritual growth that is by necessity mutual, collaborative, and cooperative. The church is Christ's body, and his headship and lordship are essential if edification is to occur. This edification occurs in the areas of unity and maturity. Unity is a unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, and it is a unity in the truth. Maturity takes place in terms of the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. The church grows into this maturity by truth and love. Speaking the truth in love involves maintaining, living, and doing the truth within relationships of love.

Edification requires the corresponding work of sanctification; both processes are mutually supportive. Thus the purposes of education must include both corporate and personal dimensions of growth in the Christian faith. Also, the immediate purpose of preparation for service must be seen in relation to the ultimate purpose of edification. It is through the actual opportunities for service that the body of Christ is built up. Therefore, education in the Christian faith that does not issue in service can be questioned as being inadequate in the same way that the book of James questions a faith devoid of deeds (James 2:14–26).

### *Colossians and Philippians: Wisdom in Christ*

In Colossians 1:9–14 Paul prays that God will fill the Colossian Christians with knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. He prays this so that these Christians might live their lives worthy of the Lord, pleasing God in every way. Paul specifies ways in which this worthiness might be expressed: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to God's glorious might, and joyfully giving thanks to God. In other words, service, spiritual growth and empowerment, and worship are evidences of the application of Christian knowledge and wisdom to life.

In this epistle Paul goes on to emphasize the supremacy of Christ in creation and his centrality in the experience of Christians. It is in Christ that Christians have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (1:14). It is in Christ that Christians must center their education. Paul describes his purpose in ministering that fellow believers "may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:2–3). It is in Christ that integration and wholeness in education can be found because in him

are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Reality itself is found in him (2:17). Paul warns of hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ (2:8). It is essential that the christocentric character of Christian education be recognized and affirmed at its roots. Christ himself is at the center of all life from a Christian world and life view.

In relation to the centrality of Christ and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him, Christians are called to a rigorous task in the area of education. This task is suggested in Paul's exhortations to the Christians at Philippi. In Philippians 4:8–9, Paul shares a vast agenda for Christian educators at all levels of society:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

This is an agenda encompassing all the areas of human intellectual endeavor and study. In relation to these areas, Christians are to think about such things and take such things into account. They are to allow such valuable knowledge to shape their attitudes and lives. But the obligation does not end with mere thought or reflection. Whatever these Philippian Christians had learned, received, or heard from Paul, or had seen in him, was to be put into practice. Thought without practice is incomplete. It is also helpful to note that Paul's influence was not only direct and intentional through what was learned, received, and heard; it was also unintentional and indirect. Paul himself served as a model so that what was seen in his life was also taught. This is the dimension of teaching that is more caught than taught through relationships with students.

### *John: Supremacy of Relationships*

While emphasizing wisdom and knowledge, Christian educators must also be aware of the dimension of interpersonal relationships addressed in the New Testament. Christian education centers on relationships with the Triune God, with other persons, and with all of creation. Various Scriptures could be cited that deal with the relationships among persons as they are to be patterned after the foundational relationship with God. One passage of particular significance is John 15:12–17, which presents Jesus's new commandment to love others as he himself has loved his disciples. Jesus modeled this love in how he taught both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman in his encounters with them as recorded

in the Gospel of John. This commandment to love is overwhelming and yet foundational for all interpersonal interactions in Christian education.

Also of significance is the nature of Jesus's relationship, as the Master Teacher, with his disciples, his students. Jesus shared his very life by laying it down for his disciples. They were viewed not just as servants but more significantly as friends. Wherever possible, teachers are called upon to foster friendships with students and to give of themselves sacrificially following the model of Jesus. Sacrificial giving can include such efforts as being available both before and after scheduled teaching times for interaction and active listening with students.

Paul describes his relationship to his Thessalonian disciples as one that includes both maternal and paternal dimensions (1 Thess. 2:7–12). In verse 8, Paul says that the ministers and teachers were delighted to share not only the gospel of God but their lives as well.<sup>30</sup> The maternal dimension included caring and nurturing, while the paternal dimension included encouraging, comforting, and urging others to live lives worthy of God. The challenge is for Christian teachers to be open to this level of servanthood, which places the teacher in a position of risk and vulnerability in loving and interacting with students. This interaction requires the sharing of one's very life and the willingness to serve as an example in guiding others. Being an example means not that the teacher is a complete and sinless person, but rather that he or she, like other persons, is in need of forgiveness and yet still seeks to be faithful.

Complementing the focus on love in relationships is the dimension of truth. Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 1:22, and 2 John 1 link the virtues of love and truth in encouraging Christians to speak or maintain the truth in love or to love in truth. There must be a standard of truth. For the Christian educator, this is provided in the Scriptures and consummately in the person of Jesus Christ. There is the assurance that all truth, wherever discerned, is God's truth, for God alone is its source. Truth without love results in harshness, and love without truth results in compromise. The Christian gospel maintains both of these virtues together in a creative complementarity.<sup>31</sup> It is a constant challenge in every educational setting to balance both love and truth through one's teaching. These themes are explored in the appendices of this third edition in relation to postmodernism.

An additional responsibility for teachers is suggested by the admonition issued in 2 Timothy 2:2. Teachers are called to duplicate their efforts through the teaching ministries of their students (Luke 6:40). Persons who are taught are to be prepared and equipped to teach others. Thus the Christian teacher

30. See also 1 Timothy 4:16.

31. See Thom Hopler, *A World of Difference: Following Christ beyond Our Cultural Walls* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981), 185–95, for a helpful general discussion of these themes.

is to be sensitive to opportunities to disciple others. To fulfill this obligation, the Christian teacher depends on the work and presence of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

### *Hebrews: A Question of Readiness*

Hebrews 5:11–6:3 provides insights for the important question of readiness prior to and during teaching interactions:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.

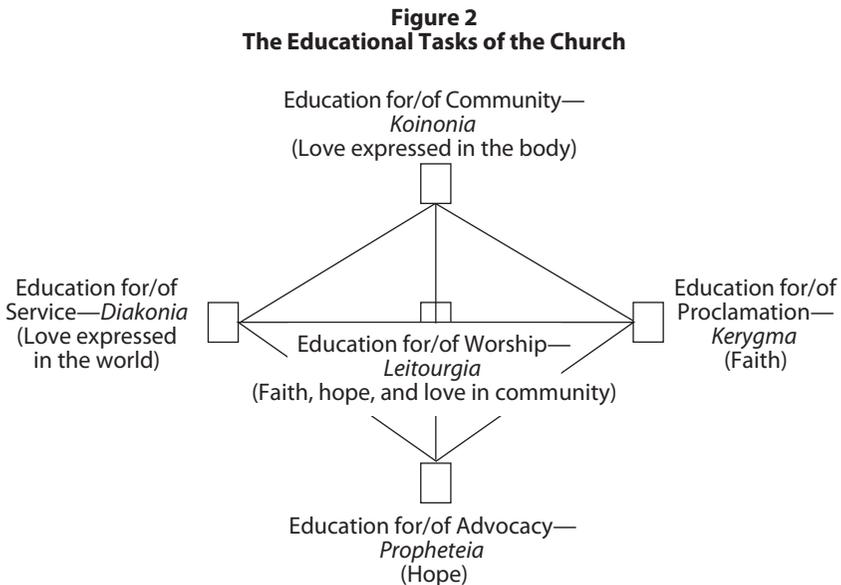
The writer to the Hebrews warns against those who may fall away from the faith and explains that some need to be retaught the elementary truths of God's Word. This is the case because they had not understood, accepted, or exemplified these truths in their lives. These persons are slow to learn. Using the metaphor of food, the writer notes that some persons need the milk of elementary teaching because they cannot handle the solid food of teachings for the mature. Other passages also describe various levels of maturity (1 Cor. 2:6–3:4; 9:19–23; Titus 2:1–15; 1 Pet. 5:1–7) that must be assessed and considered in any teaching endeavor. Christian educators are called to exercise discernment in adjusting their teaching to the spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics of their hearers in the effort to address participants at appropriate levels of understanding and readiness.

The issue of adequately assessing the readiness of participants in Christian education efforts is complex and can be overwhelming, given the many variables that influence persons individually, corporately, and contextually. Yet there is a resource person available to Christian educators for this task. That person is the Holy Spirit. But in discussing the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who assists Christian teachers in assessing the readiness of participants and planning appropriately for it, teachers must realize that their readiness also is an issue. Educators are reminded of the warning in James 3:1: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that

we who teach will be judged more strictly.” Part of that judgment involves the discernment that one in fact has the gift of teaching.<sup>32</sup> Confirmation of that gift involves active service and a genuine openness to the feedback of others and to the improvement of one’s skills.

## An Integrated Model

Based on the biblical foundations for Christian education, it is possible to suggest a model to guide current thought and practice. Dr. E. V. Hill uses the image of a softball or baseball diamond to suggest the tasks of the Christian church.<sup>33</sup> But moving beyond the confines of a baseball diamond, a network or web of education can be proposed for the church’s tasks. These tasks have direct implications for the purposes of Christian education (see fig. 2).



In this model, one base represents education *for* proclamation (*kerygma*), which seeks to enable persons to consider their personal commitment to Jesus Christ. The task of proclamation involves teaching and preaching the gospel along

32. For a discussion of the gift of teaching, see Pazmiño, *By What Authority Do We Teach?* 59–76.

33. Edward V. Hill, “A Congregation’s Response” (lecture presented at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, January 21, 1976).

with the ministry of evangelism. By necessity this purpose includes sharing the basic content of the Christian faith. It also includes teaching about the need for personal response, about the need to make a decision regarding the new life offered in Jesus Christ. Persons are not educated into God's kingdom, but educational ministries are opportunities for them to explore the dimensions of faith in response to the gospel. The Christian virtue most closely, but not exclusively, associated with this emphasis in Christian education is faith.<sup>34</sup>

Faith can be viewed as including the dimensions of *notitia* (intellectual affirmation), *assensus* (affective affirmation), and *fiducia* (intentional affirmation) as persons respond to God's activities and revelation in Jesus Christ. Education for proclamation or evangelism focuses on enabling persons to explore and grapple with these dimensions of faith and encouraging their response. This response includes one's initial personal response and then efforts to share the Christian faith with others. The proclamation of the *kerygma* is crucial in this process (Rom. 10:17), with educational encounters providing for dialogue on the issues of faith in addition to the proclamation of the gospel. This base centers on faith, which is most often related to the temporal dimension of the past with an assurance based upon Christ's completed work in history.

In addition to education *for* proclamation with its explicit and active emphasis on the *kerygma*, this base also represents the education *of* proclamation. The education *of* proclamation denotes a more receptive and implicit teaching and learning that occurs through the witness of the Christian faith in word and deed. Education *for* proclamation includes encouraging the response of non-Christians to the claims of Christ and training Christians for their witness in various settings. Education *of* proclamation includes the nonformal and informal learning that occurs when Christians personally and corporately acknowledge their commitments to Christ and the implications of such commitments before the world in various ways. For example, a local church's advocacy and/or outreach to single parents and their participation in church life, or a church's commitment to honesty and integrity in its economic and political life can be a proclamation of the gospel.

A second base represents education *for* community (*koinonia*)—fellowship with God and with other Christians. It includes the processes of training, instruction, and nurture, which enable persons to grow and mature in their faith.<sup>35</sup> Maturation and growth, given the nature of Christian community and

34. Christian virtues or values become important in Christian education because who and what persons are and are becoming in Christ are central concerns. See, for example, 1 Timothy 4:12–16.

35. *Training* can be defined as education that deals with predictable, replicable situations. Training is a conserving element of education that emphasizes continuities with the past and the

fellowship, include not only personal sanctification but also corporate or mutual edification. For the purpose of analysis, it is possible to distinguish training, instruction, and nurture, and to include both personal and corporate dimensions. In actuality, however, these various elements should complement one another and foster an integration of biblical content and personal experience, of faith and life. Education *for* community involves the quest for sameness or what persons hold in common with others. One responsibility of both pastoral and lay leadership is to explore areas of sameness that help to form a sense of corporate identity or community. The sameness sought does not deny the realities of difference and the place of distinct individuals in the community. The Christian virtue most closely but, again, not exclusively associated with education for community is that of love as it is expressed within the body for others. Love as a virtue relates most closely to the temporal dimension of the present, with a focus on maximizing the potential of each current situation and interaction.

Paralleling the active and receptive models of the first base described, this second base can also be seen as encompassing two facets. The education *of* community includes the knowledge and implied insights and values that are communicated through the shared life of the faith community itself as it reflects its fellowship with God. For example, church dinners that seek to include everybody and perhaps share dishes of various ethnic, cultural, and racial groups communicate and teach values and attitudes beyond formal training and instruction. Lessons more caught than taught comprise the elements of education *of* community, and each faith community, group, family, or school must ask itself what in fact is being nurtured during time spent together.

A third base represents education *for* service (*diakonia*)—service to God, to other persons, and to the world. Christian educators are called to equip Christians for the task of service within the local church and the task of incarnating their faith in life through efforts and actions. In terms of the wider society, Christians are called in an incarnated ministry to be vehicles for Christ's transforming power, which can be effective at several different levels. Christians are called to be salt and light in various organizations and institutions, to work for justice and righteousness in various economic, political, social, educational, and ecclesiastical structures. The church order outlined in

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passing on of an unchanging heritage. *Instruction* can be defined as education that deals with unpredictable situations. Instruction is a transforming element of education that emphasizes renewal and change in response to changing situations in society and a consideration of the discontinuities with the past. It envisions new possibilities and calls for the personal and corporate responses of Christians. *Nurture* involves love, nourishment, and spiritual direction. Nurture, by its very nature, requires a vital and intimate relationship and interaction with others.

Ephesians 4:7–13 points up the need to work for the ministry of all believers, with all serving and ministering in the contexts of their homes, workplaces, communities, societies, and world.

Christ's transforming power is also operative in the intentional and ideational realms, where knowledge and meanings are produced and distributed. A Christian world and life view is crucial for realizing meaning, purpose, and integration in life, and the call is to bring every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), recognizing that it is the Lord who gives wisdom and that from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Prov. 2:6).

This renewing power of Christ is also needed in the realm of culture, with its various values, beliefs, and attitudes. Christ seeks to preserve, redeem, and transform cultures. Christians need spiritual discernment in exploring how the Christian faith interacts with surrounding cultures. The Christian virtue most closely associated with this third base, as with the second base, is love. But in this instance, love is primarily focused on the world and expressed in deed and word through service. As with second base, the temporal focus is on the present.

This third base includes a receptive mode to complement the active stance of education *for* service. Actual deeds *of* service for various persons, groups, and causes provide occasions when others can learn from the perspective of both Christians and non-Christians. Christians, for example, can learn the real human costs of certain political, social, and economic policies through ministries with the poor and in the process be spiritually enriched through contacts with disadvantaged Christians. On the other hand, non-Christians can gain insights about the Christian faith from the sacrificial service of Christians in the world as they serve as living epistles to the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

The fourth base signifies education *for* advocacy (*propheteia*). Christians are called to realize that their hope is in God and God's reign in history. With this perspective they are able to advocate those concerns that fulfill God's purposes in the world. Advocacy works for the restoration of hope in the wider community and society. As noted in the discussion of the Old Testament's prophetic legacy, the great church teacher Augustine suggested that "hope has two lovely daughters, anger and courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they need not remain as they are."<sup>36</sup> Human efforts in various areas of life and ministry must be evaluated in terms of kingdom values. Outcomes must be evaluated in terms of God's creative and redemptive purposes for all humankind, which include concerns for justice,

36. This quote attributed to Augustine is cited in McKeachie, *Teaching Tips*, 384.

peace, and righteousness throughout creation. God's purpose is "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph. 1:10). All creation awaits the future glory that God will bring to fruition in the completed adoption of God's children and the redemption of their bodies (Rom. 8:18–27). There will be a new heaven and a new earth that will be the home of righteousness as God has promised (2 Pet. 3:13). John speaks of God's future in Revelation 21:1–5:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

This perspective of God's future kingdom negates neither an appreciation of the past nor an active working in the present to cooperate with God's purposes within the church and within the world. Education *for* advocacy encourages Christians to gain this perspective on the future and God's purposes in addressing current realities. Moses serves as a model advocate for his people in the Old Testament. Moses worked for the political, economic, social, and spiritual liberation of the people in Egypt. He sought their empowerment as a fulfillment of God's plan. In the New Testament, Jesus as the Second or New Moses fulfills this role of advocacy and upon his departure from earth sends another advocate, the Holy Spirit, to intercede on behalf of the people. In response to such advocacy, Christians are to advocate for the persons and concerns that are close to the heart of God. The Christian virtue logically associated with this fourth base is hope, which envisions God's future and human participation in that future along with calling persons, communities, and societies to account just as the prophets of old did. In commenting on the place of advocacy with older adults, Arthur Becker identifies three aspects of advocacy: the correction of injustice, the positive pursuit of justice, and the prevention of injustice.<sup>37</sup>

37. Arthur Becker, *Ministry with Older Persons* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 196, as cited by Harriet Kerr Swenson, *Visible and Vital: A Handbook for the Aging Congregation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 108, 129.

These three aspects of advocacy are components of the prophetic calling of God's people.

The challenge inherent in the prophetic task of the church calls for risk and vulnerability as modeled by the prophets of the Old Testament. To avoid this risk is to neglect the ministry of reconciliation that is given to the church (2 Cor. 5:16–21). The prophets of old assumed this task of calling peoples and nations to account before God. Christians in each age are not to shrink from such a demand. This requires that prophetic words be honored in corporate life and that believers demonstrate a willingness to respond to the demands of the gospel of Christ.

Education *for/of* advocacy includes both acculturation and disenculturation. Acculturation is a process that affirms the place of a particular Christian culture and involves becoming a responsible member of a community in which that culture is affirmed. In contrast to acculturation, disenculturation is a process that places the values of God's kingdom above any given cultural expression and community of the Christian faith. Both processes are interdependent and necessary, for as Lesslie Newbigin has aptly observed, "the gospel provides the stance from which all culture is to be evaluated; but the gospel . . . is always embodied in some cultural form."<sup>38</sup>

Education *for* advocacy can be seen as acculturation into the vision of God's future as embodied and expressed in a particular community with its proximate purposes for God's reign. Education *of* advocacy involves a receptive stance that enables a critical consciousness of proximate purposes in light of the ultimate purposes of God's reign. A particular Christian community, for example, may emphasize the need for its participants to use the most updated media and technological resources to equip children and youth for the challenges of influencing modern Western culture. This can be viewed as an appropriate proximate purpose. But from the perspective of the kingdom values of shalom for all and stewardship of global resources, the tremendous outlay of capital to secure such media and technology may be questioned in terms of ultimate purposes.

The emphasis that centers and integrates educational efforts at each of the four bases is education *for* worship (*leitourgia*), located at the center of the diamond network. In educational ministries, persons are to be encouraged to see the sovereign God as Lord of all and therefore worthy of worship, honor, glory, and praise. Education *for* worship encourages persons to celebrate the presence of God in all areas of life and to respond with the sacrifice of their

38. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 21.

very lives (Rom. 12:1–2). Abraham Heschel is a religious educator who has spoken directly to this need. Heschel observes that the Greeks learned in order to comprehend, the modern person learns in order to use, but the Hebrews learned in order to revere. Heschel reminds Christian educators of the need to encourage students to revere, to sense wonder and awe in response to God and to our multifaceted creation.<sup>39</sup>

A legitimate question can be raised as to why worship should be identified as the hub in my proposed model.<sup>40</sup> It is the worship, praise, and adoration of God that unites persons with all creation.<sup>41</sup> The potential for connection and integration in Christian education is enhanced if we center on the worship and adoration of God in a world that is struggling with increased fragmentation and a corresponding loss of meaning in life. But Christian educators have not adequately addressed education for worship. Instead, models of education emphasizing production and efficiency have been perpetuated. Alternative models based on biblical sources can provide the opportunities for persons to reflect on the majesty and wonder of God and God’s workings. They can tap the creative potential of persons that finds expression in praise of God. The chief end and purpose of education, as of life, can thus be seen in terms of the glorification and enjoyment of God. Archbishop William Temple has said: “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”<sup>42</sup> Christian education at its best enables persons to worship the one true God in all of God’s fullness and grandeur.

In addition to education *for* worship, the education *of* worship must be noted. Worship is active participation in the liturgy of the faith community, which attributes honor, glory, praise, and worth to God. The word “liturgy” is derived from the term *leitourgia* and emphasizes the need to connect education to the liturgical life of faith communities. Active liturgical participation can result in receptivity to new insights regarding God, self, others, or the world. Such receptivity can include cognitive, aesthetic, emotional, intuitive, volitional, and spiritual insights and bring a greater sense of wholeness and integration to life. A fulfilling liturgical life can have an impact on all of life in liberating ways.

39. Abraham J. Heschel, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism from the Writings of Abraham Heschel*, ed. Fritz A. Rothschild (New York: Free Press, 1959), 35–54.

40. Debra Dean Murphy explores this question in *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004).

41. “Escape into Africa,” in *Whole People of God Adult Curriculum*, December 31, 1995 (Inver Grove Heights, MN: Logos Productions, 1995), A 111–21.

42. William Temple, *The Hope of a New World* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941), 30.

Beyond the particulars of each base, educators must be aware of the interconnections among the bases in order to form a network. The first base of *kerygma* primarily emphasizes knowing, and its complement at the third base of *diakonia* emphasizes doing. For effective educational ministry, both knowing and doing of the faith must be addressed along this first axis. The second basis of *koinonia* emphasizes feeling at one or being reconciled with God, others, and all creation while being in the world. The complement of this second base is the fourth base of *propheteia*, which stresses not so much feeling at one as feeling distinct or being not of the world in relation to the values of God's kingdom. As with the first axis, understanding educational ministry along this second axis requires balancing the Christian vocation of being in but not of the world, balancing the reconciliation of the already present blessings of God with the anticipation of the "not yet." The fifth and central base of *leitourgia* serves as the nexus of the two axes, where the challenges of knowing, feeling, and doing are brought into perspective in relation to discerning the eternal purposes of God and orienting all of life to God's glory and praise. It is on these bases that the educational ministry of the Christian church is to be founded.

## Conclusion

The biblical foundations for Christian education are multiple but can be woven together to provide an impressive tapestry of ministry in the service of Jesus Christ. The warp and woof of that tapestry are the efforts of the sovereign Triune God and those of God's adopted family who have been gifted and equipped for educational ministry.

The perspective of Scripture provides the essential basis for educational ministries. In their various efforts, Christian educators may well take to heart Peter's exhortation:

Each one should use whatever spiritual gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 4:10–11)

Table 2 summarizes some of the foundational passages and major insights suggested in this chapter. Other portions of Scripture could be cited that provide additional insights and potential models. These specific passages are noted

only to provide an initial basis for discussion and dialogue in grappling with biblical foundations. In considering these foundations, Christian educators must evaluate their theological commitments; doing so raises issues taken up in the second chapter, which explores theological foundations.

TABLE 2  
Biblical Foundations for Christian Education

Passage	Audience/ Focus	Insight	Implication/ Question
Deut. 6:1–9	Family/parents	God’s commands foster loving obedience.	Formal and nonformal instruction must be deliberate.
Deut. 30:11–20	Nation	A decision for life as offered by God is crucial.	The priority of education emphasizing personal response must be seen.
Deut. 31:9–13	Faith community	God’s Word must be shared.	Focus on the Word of God must include opportunities for response.
Deut. 31:30–32:4	Nation	Liberation and celebration are purposes for teaching.	Does our teaching empower and issue in worship and joy?
Ps. 78	Intergenerations	The stories/accounts of God must be passed on.	Intergenerational sharing is indispensable.
Neh. 8:1–18	Nation	Teachers must foster understanding and obedience.	A holistic response to God’s Word can bring personal and communal renewal.
Wisdom literature	Teaching relationships	Wisdom must be shared.	Biblical wisdom is practical.
Prophetic literature	Nation	We are accountable to God.	Lordship applies to all of life.
Matthew	Jesus’s disciples	Jesus suggests a new educational agenda.	Obedient disciples are nurtured by sharing vision, memory, and mission.
Luke 24:13–35	Disciples	A teacher must be attentive to students.	Dialogue and listening are valuable for disclosure.
1 Cor. 2:6–16	Faith community	Spiritual wisdom is distinct.	How can one foster the message and work of the Holy Spirit in teaching?
Ephesians	Church	Equipping and training for ministry is the purpose of education.	Mutual edification requires active commitment and service.
Colossians/ Philippians	Christian wisdom	We must use our minds for Christ.	The pursuit of truth requires diligence in thought and practice.
John 15:12–17	Christian relationships	Love and truth are both needed.	Interpersonal relationships require attention.

Passage	Audience/ Focus	Insight	Implication/ Question
1 Thess. 2:7–12	Discipling relationships	Teachers share their life and message in teaching.	Female and male dimensions of nurture must be affirmed.
Heb. 5:11–6:3	Teaching relationships	A varied diet may be necessary.	Consider readiness in teaching.

### Points to Ponder

- What additional biblical texts or passages might be added in exploring biblical foundations for Christian education from your educational experiences?
- How do Old and New Testament perspectives relate to and compare with those identified in the appendices of this work as characterizing postmodernism, and why?
- Walter Brueggemann notes components of the Old Testament canon to guide education. What components of a New Testament canon could be proposed to guide Christian education?
- Suggest additional models beyond the five-task model presented here and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of any models to guide Christian education using biblical foundations.
- Identify gaps and additional implications and questions for the biblical foundations noted in table 2.