

“Raising Godly Adults”

Colossians 3:1-14

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It's an honor to be with you all to celebrate and encourage each other which is so important in educational ministry. I'm going to share a little bit about myself; how God called me to Christian education and then I have a message that the Lord has brought to me of how we can work together to raise Godly adults.

I want to start reading the Great Commission from Matthew 28:18-20 which says, *[18] And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* I will also tie this into the most important commandment from the book of Mark but first I just want to share just a little bit about me.

I recently moved from Tacoma, which is just near Seattle, in Washington. I was there for five and a half years with my family, and I served as Head of School in Life Christian Academy, which is a church sponsored school just like Briarwood Christian School. My accent gives me away a little bit that I'm not native to the state of Washington. I moved from Australia with my family to lead Life Christian Academy after serving as Head of School for ten years in one of the leading Christian schools in Australia.

So who am I? I say first and foremost, I'm a Christian educator who loves the Lord and am someone who believes in the next generation. This is a key part of my Biblical worldview and I will talk more about my Biblical worldview. I grew up in a Christian home and I was taught to read God's Word. I was taught how to pray. I saw the value of daily devotions from a really young age by my parents which has really shaped Felicity's (my wife) and my parenting. My parents never, ever took the foot off the gas in spiritually nurturing me but I did look a little bit different at different stages in life, and I'm really pleased that it was that way. Importantly, my wife's experience was just the same with her upbringing.

Felicity and I have been married for 23 years. Our oldest son is Jake who is a senior at Grand Canyon University and he's studying business management and is the student body vice president. Our daughter Gabby who is a sophomore at TCU (Go frogs) is studying physical therapy. She is on a track scholarship, but triathlon is her number one sport and she's been selected in U.S. national teams, swag of medals in nationals in Australia and in the United States in a part of the Olympic development squad. Yani is our youngest who is going to be a junior at Briarwood Christian School and he's an avid tennis player. Felicity and I are so blessed to have three kids who love the Lord and we also have a really, really cute new puppy dog that we just got a few days ago.

Now I'm going to share a little bit about my call to Christian education because this has been something that's really powerful and the authority of that move or call for me to Christian education has really influenced my life. I was fortunate to have 11 years as a professional tennis player traveling around the world. I graduated from college with a science degree in genetic engineering and microbiology. I have a computer science degree in programing and computer security, and then I have a pure high school education degree in science and technology

instruction out of a cohort that started out of 500 students. I was the only graduate that came through with that science computing degree and that's an important point.

While on the tour and at the end of my time, I received a phone call from a Head of School at a small Christian school in Tasmania, and I have absolutely no idea how this person knew what continent I was in. My parents, they had no idea which continent I was in but I used to keep a house in Reno, Nevada, and I share that house with my sister, who was playing tennis at UNO. He offered me a job as a PE teacher and an athletic director. Now, bear in mind I had no qualifications for that and I just I didn't know what to do but I had a stirring that this was going to be the end of my time playing tennis. So I when he called me, I said to him, "You can call me back at exactly the same time tomorrow and I'm going to pray about this" I'm going to bring this before the Lord and I'm going to see if this is what it's meant to be, because I really had a stirring that that's what God had wanted for me. I had a bad practice. My arm hurt and I just really felt that this was the prompting I needed to listen to God. Two weeks later, without anything written down or any agreement, I turned up at 8:00 in the morning to teach physical education and be the athletic director at this little Christian school.

In the hierarchy of schools in Australia, we have the grammar schools which are really prestigious. They pay a lot of money and then you have the Catholic schools, the public schools, and then the poor Christian schools. The difference probably between those, if we're talking money is probably \$100,000 in the grammar schools for a first year teacher or someone with my qualifications and in the Christian schools, it's about \$40,000 so it's a big difference. My friends just thought I was crazy to go to Christian schools but that's where God called me to.

I met Felicity at that Christian school, and we started our kids off in Christian education at that school. God called me to Christian education and by God's grace He has blessed me in that ministry. The words of Matthew 28 have given my work purpose and those words have been so influential in me in that drive, and I hope they are for you as well. I enjoy the opportunity to teach children to love the Lord and as an administrator, to provide opportunity for those to be enriched and spread by others. I love to work to a standard from Colossians 3:23-24 which says *[23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* That call to excellence has been something that really motivates and inspires me to do everything for the Lord.

Something to consider about Christian education is that Christian schools and Christian education are not necessarily one and the same thing. Some Christian schools are a lot better at Christian education than others. History has shown that a loss of Biblical emphasis leads to a school that started out as a Christian school can simply become a private school and Christian in its name or Christian by heritage. It starts with a slippery slide. It starts at some point with egress and not holding firm to those values.

So, let's define Christian education. I've been so blessed this week to have been able to sit in on a few sessions about Christian education with Dr. Blackmon and Mr. Holland as they prepared our new incoming teachers and our faculty to come together. I know some of the speakers who will be here next year and they are sharp people. Christian education is making disciples who are growing in fulfilling the cultural mandate, the great commandment and the Great Commission for God's glory and the good of others. That's a really big statement. Simply put, Christian education is discipleship. Discipleship takes a relationship and trust is an important ingredient. Knowing whose world this is, directs our discipleship.

The Psalms shape our thoughts and understandings on this question as to whose world this is. Psalm 24:1 says *[1] The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.* Psalm 78:5-8 says *[5] He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, [6] that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, [7] so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; [8] and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

Growing up today is tough. Any young person reading this, don't let anybody older tell you that growing up when they were younger was much harder. It's way harder growing up today. The challenges are unique. When we grew up, we were being educated for jobs that already existed. Today, we're educating children for jobs that don't even exist yet. In fact, research shows that 80% of our students who are currently in school now, when they graduate and go into the workforce, 80% of these people will be doing jobs that don't even exist yet. That's a unique and interesting dynamic. We are educating kids for a world that doesn't exist yet, so that really makes us pause and think about education a little bit more deeply.

Not only is being a student more difficult, but so is being a teacher. It gets harder and harder every year. One of our responsibilities as teachers is to serve His children and it's hard. It's tiring and sometimes it's just not fair. Despite this, we have a responsibility and even though it's tough as educators and as Christians, we can't do enough because of what God has done for us. We are charged with the responsibility to care for God's creation, and His children are a very special part of that. We're partnering with a great discipling church like Briarwood Presbyterian and with believing parents to shaping children to be image bearers of Christ.

What does the term image bearers of Christ mean? This is a much deeper look into the heart of Christian education and that is the fruit of intentional discipleship. Image bearers are active, purposeful, rational, creative, moral, free and responsible. Those last two go hand-in-hand because being free and irresponsible don't work together. They are faithful, and they're able to exercise and have dominion. They're social, relational, loving, merciful and dependent. These are attributes that we draw from the Scriptures of image bearers of Christ and these are all attributes that are evidence of fruit of a Biblical based education. No school is perfect, and neither are we at Briarwood, but we commit that will always be working on getting better in discipling image bearers of Christ in our students. A Christian school can cultivate these really well when truly working in partnership with parents and this takes a two-way trusting relationship. That's one of the unique nuances of homeschool, where the children and the parents, actually really love each other. It's a battle.

The battle for the soul of America is being fought out in the arena of worldviews. By worldviews, I mean our interpretation of reality and our view of life and the classroom has become the number one battlefield for this. In the new teachers training earlier this last week they were describing the myth of neutrality in education. This is a quote by R.C. Sproul, "There is no such thing as a neutral education. Every education, every curriculum has a viewpoint. That viewpoint either considers God in it or it does not. To teach children about life and the world in which they live without reference to God is to make a statement about God. It screams a statement. The message is either that there is no God or that God is irrelevant. Either way, the message is the same – there is no God. An irrelevant God is the same as no God at all. If God is, then He must be relevant – to His entire creation."

Society is in turmoil and this is no surprise. We have a God of order and that's why the turmoil and turbulence of the chaos that we see makes us feel uncomfortable. They diminish our parental rights and implement destructive ideologies and psychologically abusive policies. They teach racism through critical race theory (CRT), sexualize children and dumb down education through revised history, pseudo-science and lowered standards. The damage this does to our children has become obvious with the rise of physical violence, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, gender dysphoria and sexual confusion. This community may be currently sheltered from some of this, but liberal, progressive and crazy are coming to town; it's only a matter of time.

Coming from the liberal left coast, I saw the heart and the souls of our children attacked every day. Living there was a challenge. The secular world worldview has eight key tenets, and I disagree with every single one of these, but I want to mention some of these for context. The first tenet is God does not exist. Secondly, we are cosmic accidents. Thirdly, hope is only found in scientific discovery. Fourthly, religion and science are opposed to each other. Fifthly, Science is based on fact while religion is based on faith, fear and ignorance. Sixthly, morality is relative. In other words, what is wrong for me may not be wrong for you. Seventhly, there is no absolute standard of right and wrong because there is no absolute lawgiver and lastly, the Bible is full of errors and irrelevant to modern life. As believers we can see the problem with those eight tenants.

The college environment is even more aggressively anti-Christian. The late secular professor and philosopher Richard Rorty said "Parents who send their children to college should recognize that as professors we are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable." You may not realize this, but studies suggest that nearly 80% of Christian young people who attend a secular college abandon their Christian faith by the time they graduate. The Christian school teachers have the support of their school and Christian curriculum. The homeschool parents have choice. The public school teachers have parameters to what they can teach. I really sense the complexities there.

Let's shift gears slightly and talk about parenting and an opportunity that I see in this really important role. Parenting needs to be intentional. You need to diligently consider a plan for everything you want your child to learn before they are released from your nest. I hope all parents think seriously about preparing your child for adulthood. Parents are the primary owners of this responsibilities on raising children to be Godly adults. God blessed you with them and charged you with that responsibility. Hopefully as a school nurse, we hope they go home with you in the evening and all the teachers said, 'Amen.' Far too few parents have a Biblical vision for parenting and far fewer have a plan to implement it, which leads to all kinds of potential problems, missed opportunities and a decrease in our effectiveness as parents. I also hope you consider the colleges that you send your children to. As believers, if we were to be consistent and steadfast in what we set out to do, we wouldn't want our college age children influenced by nonbelievers. Teenagers are still impressionable.

I've been working alongside parents now for over 25 years and have noticed a few patterns with parents. I just want to briefly mention three of those patterns. First, we all want to succeed. We all desire to be good parents. If I were to ask a parent, 'do you want to be a good parent' the answer would always be "yes." If success was determined by desire alone, then we would have little to worry about. Nobody wants to be a bad parent.

Secondly, we believe we are doing a pretty good job as parents. Most parents, believe they're doing a good job. And why wouldn't we? Our children dominate our thinking. We

concern with every aspect of our child's well-being. We invest a significant amount of time, energy and resources into our child, into our children and so we think, 'what more can I do?'

Thirdly, many of us lack a Biblical, God honoring plan. I haven't crossed paths with many parents who can clearly and concisely tell me the outcomes that they hope to achieve in their children's life before they leave the nest and the plan to attain positive results. We may believe that we can get by with a minimum amount of effort and that we will succeed with the help of others. This is faulty thinking and a critical error that will surely catch us in the end. It's pretty easy to get busy parenting and go about our days with no real plan, no strategy, or not much thought at all on what will produce the long-term fruit for our children.

For example, as a tennis coach, I've had the opportunity to coach a lot of people. Kids never get good if I give them a court, a racket and some balls and say, "Go out there and learn how to play tennis." It takes intentional instruction, it takes mentoring, it takes practice, it takes hard work and all of those together with a plan that scaffolded and developed make us good at something. The same applies to our parenting and the same applies to our teaching.

It's never too early or too late to think about what needs to be done to launch a child into adulthood. Whether you have 18 years until I leave the nest or just one year before they leave the nest, now is a great time to chart a course to holistically disciple a child in the following areas: firm foundations, Christlike character development, Biblical beliefs and worldview, spiritual growth, life skills, relational skills, work in money management, home management, personal care, and educational essential essentials. There's a lot there and that's why it takes a plan.

God made us all to live in community and in communion with Him. I'm a believer in Christian education. So why does Briarwood Christian School exist? Colossians 1:16 says [16] *"For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him."* Briarwood Christian School exists for Him and we're going to keep it that way. We will work tirelessly and we hope and pray that our students firstly, will not just know God's standard, not just obey God's standard, but will love God standard.

There's a lot more that happens other than just inside the classroom. We have so much that happens outside the classroom. The co-curricular and the curricula go hand in hand, and having a discipleship mindset we teach the Bible, God's love and standards and we teach students to think, to lead, to discern and to love learning which are so important. That's how we prepare our students for jobs that don't exist yet. These are called transferable life skills. We believe that the Bible provides the foundation for all education and all school operations. We also believe that there also ought to be a theological underpinning behind all decisions. We're also leaving some of the things out of the classroom that don't belong in the classroom, and we should never bend on God's Word.

That's the approach of my team and the way we approach this responsibility and how we shape image bearers for Christ is what we'll prove to differentiate Briarwood Christian School from any other Christian school. I heard the description of Briarwood Christian School as a great commission school with a great commandment culture. Go and make disciples of all nations while loving the Lord your God and your neighbors. Wow, this is the Briarwood way. For me, the opportunity to enrich this fabulous transformational education already offered at Briarwood, I find that truly exciting!

In bringing some of these thoughts together what is the recipe for raising Godly adults? You might ask the question, 'So why does Briarwood Presbyterian Church have Briarwood Christian school? We all need to pull together if we're going to raise Godly adults – that's all

forms of educators, from the church, the parents, and the school you work in. This helps us to be able to do this better. All work that brings these children closer to Him is important in the eyes of the Lord. All of our work is important and to be done in the eyes of the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 says, *[6] Train up a child in the way that he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* That sounds like a Godly adult to me.

We all ought to teach a Biblical world and life view. Sometimes, depending on where you work, that means you may need to stretch some parameters no matter what you teach or no matter where you teach. We all should teach with the purpose that Christ gave us and to go about our work in a way that glorifies Him. We all ought to pray relentlessly for our children, for our students, and for their families. The challenge that parents, the school and the Christian school partners need is to intentionally embark on is raising Godly adults and to achieve this, we all need each other. That looks a little bit different for each and every one of us. We all need to trust each other and we all need to help each other out and to encourage each others as champions for this one cause.

In summary, I'm seeking a promise from all educators, from all parents, and from all pastors that in that group of people we're really intentional and the promise I'm seeking is this; we're going to fix our eyes on Jesus, focus on His Word and we're going to serve His children with all of our might, no matter how hard it gets. This is my hope and prayer for us. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this time together. Help us do our part to help raise Godly adults whether we are parents, teachers, educators, administrators or pastors. We want Your Word lived out in our lives each day to bring You glory, honor and praise. We ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.