



Education and the Church

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What is the current state of America's education system? This question would elicit a wide variety of responses and more questions. Some people may use the analogy of a hornet's nest to illustrate the swarming dynamics of our schools today. Are they safe? How could we allow God and prayer to be taken out of our schools? What dynamics do political agendas play in the lives of our children? What roles do or can the church and Christians play in the education of today's children?

Challenging Choices

Today's parents are faced with some of the most challenging decisions when it comes to making choices about their children's educational path. The free public education system has suffered the impact of a plethora of dynamics, which causes great concern from many conservative Christians. Some Christian parents are concerned about the safety of their kids in public schools these days. However, on an academic level, many public schools may offer broader options that prepare students for college and beyond.

Homeschool families enjoy freedom as they travel a path of personalizing education and allowing children to explore individual interests while discipling children in the family's faith. In addition to public schools and homeschools, there are also online schools, micro-schools, and private or religious schools. Families today have many options when it comes to school choice.

Within our Christian communities, we must ask ourselves what role we can play in supporting families and children as we prepare the next generation to carry on our banner of faith. Can education and the discipleship of a child's faith be separated? If a child is placed in a secular public education environment, what role can the church play in the discipleship of children? How can today's church support families in the processes of both educating and discipling children?

Nazarene Educators Worldwide (NEW) is an organization that passionately supports educators from our churches who serve in the various school settings. It is important to maintain a respect for all types of schools in which our educators serve daily. Churches have a critical role in both supporting the education and the discipleship of children.

Practical Ways Churches Can Help

Listed below are paths today's churches need to consider to support families and children. As an educator, we encourage you to take these ideas to your church leadership:

- **Pray.** It must be a priority to spend time praying for our teachers, decision makers, and our children. Luke 2:52 talks about Jesus growing in wisdom, stature, and in favor with both God and people. This scripture outlines four critical areas any educational system should maintain: strong academics (wisdom), physical fitness (stature), biblical instruction (spiritual/God), and social connection with peers (favor with people).
- **Develop strong discipleship programs.** The selection and training of passionate children's workers, camp counselors, Sunday school teachers, and small group leaders cannot be left to a system where any willing volunteer is a blessing. With less than 2-3 hours per week to implement direct biblical teaching toward our children, churches need to have a well-thought-out plan for the spiritual education of our children and teens. Raising our children in a biblical, holiness worldview is crucial.
- **Purchase an institutional membership to NEW.** Educators in local congregations can benefit from a professional organization that intentionally supports Christian teachers and administrators. Churches can encourage educators in their congregations by giving them an opportunity to directly connect with resources and fellowship with other Christian educators.
- **Open the church.** With most of our churches sitting relatively empty from Monday through Friday, churches can make their buildings available to homeschool groups or a micro-school group. This builds a direct bridge to individuals in your community. NEW can connect you with churches who have reaped the benefits of opening their doors to these groups.
- **Start a daycare or school.** There are also many benefits for churches to start daycares, preschools, after school clubs, or even Christian schools in their facilities. As ministries of the church, these avenues draw families to the church and provide greater opportunities for discipleship and the development of a biblical worldview. NEW can provide resources and consultants who support churches desiring to start these ministries in their church.

- **Adopt a school.** Many public schools in the community are open to working with churches that can collect items and provide for basic needs of families who struggle financially. Many teachers prepare online wish lists from which people can purchase classroom supplies and be a direct blessing to children and teachers. Collecting prayer requests from teachers of that school, providing an afterschool club, or simply delivering goody baskets with devotional books can be other fabulous ways to positively impact the educational institutions in your community.
- **Sponsor a child.** Christian education is a fabulous choice for many. Unfortunately, not all families can afford this path for their children. This is especially true in single parent families. Churches can commit to or promote the financial support for underprivileged children to attend a local Christian school that will provide greater opportunities for discipleship.

Many individuals in churches easily respond to the question, “What is the current state of America’s education system?” The avenues for churches to support children’s education are many. The challenge is to take a path that works toward being part of a solution to both educate and disciple our children. The future of the church will be greatly impacted by our educational choices.

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