

"To Be Or Not To Be"...That Is The Dilemma!

-Tom Garfield

RING! "Good afternoon, Logos School..."

"Hello. I'm wondering who I could talk to about getting our son enrolled in your high school. You see, he's really a good boy, but due to being strongly influenced by a bad group of friends, well, he has done some things that, well..., he has been expelled from his school. What do I need to do to get him into Logos? There doesn't seem to be any other option for us at this time. Can you help us out?"

That introduction, virtually verbatim, we have heard far too many times over the years. I say too many times for a couple of reasons. One is that sadly far too many students "hit the wall", i.e. finally really do something bad enough for even the government schools to notice and find themselves in that position. Another reason is that many people in our community think of a Christian school as a reform school for students who can't "make it" in the public schools.

I think the reasoning for that last assumption goes something along the lines of the following:

See, historically churches have accepted anyone, especially the downtrodden and the outcasts and we are a "Christian" institution, so we should also accept these troubled students. Also, the reasoning continues, not only should we accept them, but being a "religious" school and since we have tougher discipline and academic standards, somehow just being here will straighten these students out. However, very often, as with a reform school, the time here has been practically considered a "sentence" to be filled before the student returns to take his rightful place in society (i.e. back to the public school).

Early in our history as a Christian school, we were faced with this dilemma: Do we accept these problem students and count on our love and program to turn them around, or do we coldheartedly reject them and be labeled as a school for only the "best and the brightest?" In our educational infancy and naivete, we chose the former, since it was "obvious" that these students needed the kind of education and atmosphere we could offer.

Imagine our naive shock when time and time again we saw that not only were we not seeing these students repent and achieve; they were actually having the effect of dragging other students down with them! We did not, at least in practice, believe the scriptures that teach "bad company corrupts good morals." The reason it took us literally years to realize this ageless truth is due, I believe, to our thinking that when scripture says that good should and will triumph over evil, we acted as though Logos School was the agent for that "good", instead of the Lord and the students' parents. As much as we love and pray for students, only God alone, through Jesus Christ can truly make men new. So... what then is our role?

A very wise, grand fatherly man, who had known our Lord and worked in the ministry for many years, visited our school several years after we began operating. He came to one of my staff meetings and in the space of five minutes, encapsulated this whole dilemma, which I thought was unique to us and unsolvable. Without even my broaching the subject, essentially he said we needed to decide whether we were; A. A school for rebellious and troubled (discipline-wise) students, or B. A school whose primary goal is to help parents who want to train their children biblically. The structure of every aspect of the school would be different, based on the choice we made. He came right out and said, "You can not do both!"

I trust it is obvious which path we chose. However, the dilemma has not disappeared. Yes, we know what our limits and goals as a Christian school are, but that does not make it any easier to tell a weeping parent that we cannot accept her child. Few of these belatedly desperate parents can understand why we must think of the obligation we have to the many other families whose children would come in contact with this student. It looks and sounds like unabashed elitism and possibly even a lack of compassion. We do accept students, who, with their parents, understand and want the kind of education offered here. We will accept these students, even with problems. Key questions we ask include: How much are the parents and student willing to work with the school to make changes; is Logos expected to “do it all”? Are the parents and students looking for a new direction or just a “fix-it-quick-so-we-can-get-back-to-the-routine” diversion? And most important – Can Logos meet this student’s needs?

There are many ramifications to the choice we have made. However, ignoring our Lord’s command for compassion is not one of them. We have (and will again, if it seems wise) accepted pregnant young women who would have otherwise possibly aborted their child in order to stay in a school. Those were unique situations, but there may be other unique students in the future. We have committed to do certain things for our families here and by God’s grace and wisdom through your prayers we will continue to do so.