

# Francis Schaeffer on Education

by Francis Schaeffer

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*Christian education should produce students who are educated in the totality of knowledge, culture, and life, and who can distinguish between truth and untruth.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:6, Psalm 78:4, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 1:5-22, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:16

**Topics:** "Christian Education", "Biblical Worldview"

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## Description

Francis Schaeffer emphasizes the importance of protecting Christian schools from having their curriculum controlled by those who have negatively influenced public schools. He stresses the need for Christian schools to provide a superior education that encompasses all areas of human knowledge, rooted in the truth of the Creator's existence and His creation. Schaeffer highlights that true Christian education involves understanding the unity of truth across disciplines and associations, ultimately equipping students to discern between truth and falsehood throughout their lives.

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## Transcript

Francis Schaeffer on Education

From a speech given in 1982...

Now, moving from public schools to private schools, what is the priority? Notice I am not saying Christian schools, but all private schools, including Christian schools. If you are really going to do something here, you have to think larger than your own interest. What we must do in the private schools, including the Christian schools, is to stand against those who have done so much to ruin our public schools in not allowing them to get a hold on the private schools, and specifically, the Christian schools, through a control of the curriculum. What we should be doing is struggling to see that the Christian school's curriculum is not controlled by those who have with their world view ruined the public schools.

This does not mean that the state does not have a legitimate interest in the safety of the pupils in such a thing as a fire door. There are Christian schools that have said the state has no right even to tell them not to have a fire trap. That is not so. The state has a responsibility to say that a group of people meeting in a building like this we are meeting in have exit signs around the room, so that if there is a fire you will not all burn to death, and that is equally so for the kids in school. So the issue is not something like fire doors. The issue is that they must not begin to bring the same destructive teaching into the private schools by the back door of curriculum control that they have brought so dominantly into the public schools. We must not

allow them to bring in through the back door a control of the curriculum and especially at the very point where the Bible's content is denied and contaminated. Therefore, the protection of the Christian school curriculum is another one of the priorities, which Christians ought to be consciously and intelligently standing for.

However, let me say another side of this question of the Christian school and our protection of it. While we are saying that the Christian school is not to allow its curriculum to be corrupted, we must also say that the private school, and specifically the Christian school, should give a good education.

We are to say we are going to control the curriculum. We are not going to let the state bring in the materialistic view as the final reality through the back door. But if we are going to say that with any validity the Christian schools must be giving a really good education. It should not just be a matter of not teaching what is wrong in a twisted education that rules out a Creator. Our Christian schools should not primarily be negative oriented. It is to be positive.

It is not just to be negative. It should be a superior education, if you are going to really protect the Christian school. It should certainly teach the students how to read and write and how to do mathematics better than most public schools enjoy today. It should do that but it should also appreciate and teach the full scope of human learning. Christian education is indeed knowing the Bible, of course it is, but Christian education should also deal with all human knowledge. We can think of what I said previously about the humanities. Christian education should deal with all human knowledge - presenting it in a framework of truth, rooted in the Creator's existence, and in his creation. Real Christian education, if we are going to protect our Christian schools, is not just the negative side, it is positive, touching on all human knowledge; and in each case, according to the level of the students, showing how it fits into the total framework of truth, the truth of all reality as rooted in the Creator's existence and in His creation. If the Judeo-Christian position is the truth of all reality, and-it is, then all the disciplines, and very much including a knowledge of, and I would repeat, an appreciation of, the humanities and the arts are a part of Christian education. Some Christians seem absolutely blind at this point.

If Christianity is not just one more religion, one more upper story kind of thing (as I speak of it in *Escape From Reason* and in my other books) then it has something to say about all the disciplines, and it certainly has something to say about the humanities and the arts and the appreciation of them. And I want to say quite firmly, if your Christian school does not do this, I do not believe it is giving a good education. It is giving a truncated education and it is not honoring to the Lord.

If truth is one, that is if truth has unity, then Christian education means understanding, and being excited by, the associations between the disciplines and showing how these associations are rooted in the Creator's existence. I do not know if you know what you are hearing or not. It is a flaming fire. It is gorgeous if you understand what we have in the teaching and revelation of God. If we are going to have really a Christian education, it means understanding truth is not a series of isolated subjects but there are associations, and the associations are rooted in nothing less than the existence of the Creator Himself.

True Christian education is not a negative thing; it is not a matter of isolating the student from the full scope of knowledge. Isolating the student from large sections of human knowledge is not the basis of a Christian education. Rather it is giving him or her the framework or total truth, rooted in the Creator's existence and in the Bible's teaching, so that in each step of the formal learning process the student will understand what is true and what is false and why it is true or false. It is not isolating students from human

knowledge. It is teaching them in a framework of the total Biblical teaching, beginning with the tremendous central thing, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It is teaching in this framework, so that on their own level, as they are introduced to all of human knowledge, they are not introduced in the midst of a vacuum, but they are taught each step along the way why what they are hearing is either true or false. That is true education. The student, then, is an educated person. I just say in passing, John Harvard understood that when he founded Harvard University. It was founded with this whole thing in mind. The student, then if he is taught this way, is an educated person, who will have the tools to keep learning and enjoy learning throughout all of life. Is life dull? How can it be dull? No, a true education, a Christian education, is more than the negative, though that is there. It is giving the tools in the opening the doors to all human knowledge, in the Christian framework so they will know what is truth and what is untruth, so they can keep learning as long as they live, and they can enjoy, they can really enjoy, the whole wrestling through field after field of knowledge. That is what an educated person is.

In short, Christian education should produce students more educated in the totality of knowledge, culture and life, than non-Christian education rooted in a false view of truth. The Christian education should end with a better educated boy and girl and man and woman, than the false could ever produce. Protecting the Christian school must carry with it more than the negative; it should produce a superior education in all areas of. knowledge, and notice I am saying all areas of human knowledge.

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