

February 10, 2002

Character Counts

For time s sake, I edited this for preaching Sunday morning; however, it is all here. I will do a greatly expanded version in the next Examiner.

Also, a point I will make in the Examiner is that God will raise up the pagans to do what Christians have failed to do, and in this case, they have failed to pass on Christian Character to their children. Now the Christian s children, many times, act as bad or worse than do the pagan s children.

Because of sin, God sat women and children over His people, Isaiah 3:12. And thus God will raise up a despot rather than have anarchy reign in a nation. Obviously, neither I nor anyone else (regardless of what Tim Lahay and Jerry Fallwell say in their School of Prophecy) know the secret counsels of God. But I believe the Lord is raising up a godless study course because the Christians are no longer the salt and light as commanded by God. God will not allow anarchy to take over.

Thus the following could well be the hand of God moving to do what Christians have failed to do.

Character Counts

*Genesis 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, **and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.***

There are many moves across the country to introduce **Character Training classes** in the public schools. However, since the Christian God has been removed, these classes must exist without the Christian God or His word. The state schools can and do let in all kinds of false gods, but not the God of the Bible.

7th GRADERS MEMORIZE KORAN VERSES, PRAY TO ALLAH In the wake of Sept. 11, an increasing number of Calif. public school students must attend an intensive 3-week course on Islam, reports ASSIST News Service. The course mandates that seventh-graders learn the tenets of Islam, study the important figures of the faith, wear a robe, adopt a Muslim name and stage their own jihad. Students must memorize many verses in the Koran, are taught to pray "in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful" and chant, "Praise to Allah, Lord of Creation." We could never teach Christianity like this &. We can't even mention the name of Jesus in [most] public schools, &Can you imagine the barrage of lawsuits and problems we would have from the ACLU if Christianity were taught? [Some see] the course as a tool [indoctrination?], not only to engender sympathy and support for the Muslim cause, but for recruitment &. Islam is presented broadly and positively, whereas the limited references to Christianity are shown negatively, with events such as the Inquisition, and the Salem witch hunts highlighted in bold, black type. The portrayal of Islam omits the wars, massacres, cruelties against Christians and other non-Muslims that Islam has consistently perpetrated over the centuries. (Adapted, 1/11 WorldNetDaily]

Can character be taught without God and His word?

Do these **Character Training** classes equip this generation to *be as gods*, able to determine for themselves what is good and evil.

Are these **character training classes** an answer to fallen man s corrupt dream the results of Christianity without Christ nor the word of God?

Bettie and I went to a preacher s meeting last week over in Union City, IN. We spent the night with another pastor on over in Ohio. The pastor we stayed with was sort of the home school leader in his county. But he also has a Christian school. He is the only person I have met who uses ACE to a good advantage.

His school is in an old public school building, and he has a good enough reputation that the county courts will

recommend troubled kids to him. And he welcomes the kids with open arms, and is able to help them and their families.

I found that normally a Christian school cannot operate with the goal of helping the unsaved, but that was Jim Leonard's calling, so he can make it work. Bro Leonard and his wife put us up for the night.

While we were there, he told us about a program being instituted in the public schools in his county, and he gave us one of the booklets the schools are passing out to the kids. The program is called, **CHARACTER FIRST**, and has a web site by that name, one word.

Pastor Leonard, his wife, Bettie and myself all picked up the same impression that is, the material looks exactly like Bill Gothard's material. I don't have time to go into that point, but Gothard did have a hand in the material.

Bettie called my attention to some signs here in our small town. They are blue, and are on a couple of light poles here in Linden. They say, **CHARACTER COUNTS** in large white letters. Then they have a Greek column with Montgomery County across the bottom, also in white letters.

(This is a strange sign to have up in Montgomery County considering that the Ten Commandments were so willingly removed from the Court House lawn. In other words, the county commissioners did not have enough character to challenge the threat of a law suit to remove the Commandments.)

These Montgomery county signs are from another program which is similar to CHARACTER FIRST, and it promotes **6 pillars**:

- 1) trustworthiness
- 2) respect
- 3) responsibility
- 4) fairness
- 5) caring
- 6) citizenship.

The **CHARACTER COUNTS** web site had this statement:

It just makes sense to teach young people right from wrong, in the classroom, living room and locker room. We want to be surrounded by good people, people we can trust to make decisions according to principle rather than expediency. After all, what are education, coaching and child-rearing supposed to be about? Developing good people who can live healthy, happy lives of purpose or just clever people who can pass a ball or a test?

There are at least two things from this statement that should get our attention:

First, who defines right and wrong ?

Second, what is the purpose of child-rearing?

What is the purpose of child-rearing according to the world?

From what I have gathered from browsing the web sites, these **ethics classes** teach that the purpose of life, and, therefore, child-rearing, is to be **successful** and **share** your success with other people, take care of the **environment** and be good citizens, **obedient** to all authority. Since these ethics classes must exist in a godless vacuum, there can be no distinction whether that authority is good or bad, which is Gothard's stand.

Who is going to tell the kids that **abortion** is wrong when the state says it is good? The ethics classes cannot say abortion is wrong, because they **cannot speak against** public policy.

What is the purpose of child-rearing according to God's word?

Ecclesiastes 12:13 *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

Revelation 14:7 *Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

The purpose of child-rearing according to God's word is so the children may know and do the word of God, so that **whether they eat or drink, they may be able to do all to the glory of God.**

Because these ethics classes must exist in a **godless vacuum**, they can not mention God and His commandments, so the ethics must be **man centered** that is, what is best for man.

Nor can these classes define any purpose for the student any higher than man either what is **best** for the **state**, what is best for **himself**, what is best for his **neighbor** and what is best for the **environment**. The classes cannot define **what is best** in terms of God's word, for God's word is forbidden. So **BEST MUST** be defined in terms of man.

The state cannot define the purpose of man as to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, so the ethics must be completely man centered.

The state realizes that a society without a moral foundation will crumble, but the state does not want the Christian God connected in anyway with that moral foundation.

The goal of these ethics classes is to try to form the **fruit of the spirit** in the young people without God.

Galatians 5:13 ¶ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.** 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

A page from CHARACTER FIRST has this statement:

Good character is the inward motivation to do what is right, according to the highest standards of behavior, in every situation. It transcends age, position, financial status, race, religion, education, gender, and personality. Good character springs from the heart.

A couple things:

First, highest standards of behavior. Who establishes those standards?

Second, Good character springs from the heart.

Matthew 15:19 *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.*

Here we see that a goal of the **character training classes** is to change the heart, and that change is attempted without Christ.

Ezekiel 36:26 *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Galatians 6:15 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

The devil told Eve, Though it is forbidden, if you will only eat of the tree of knowledge, you will be as gods. You will no longer need the Lord God, but you can know good and evil without Him.

And the goal of these **character training** classes fit very well with the devil's offer to Eve.

Moreover, the **character training classes** fit very well **within humanist religion promoted** by the state school systems. I will only read one point from the Manifesto:

We read from the Humanist Manifesto, I (1933):

— ~~**ELEVENTH:** Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking. (Among the 34 signers of the first Manifesto, was John Dewey, the father of progressive education.)~~

Forty years later, a second Manifesto was put together. Note the first point:

— ~~**FIRST:** In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine "spiritual" experience and aspiration.~~

— ~~We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. ... We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of survival and fulfillment of the human race. As nontheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.~~

— ~~We appreciate the need to preserve the best ethical teachings in the religious traditions of humankind, many of which we share in common. But we reject those features of traditional religious morality that deny humans a full appreciation of their own potentialities and responsibilities. Traditional religions often offer solace to humans, but, as often, they inhibit humans from helping themselves or experiencing their full potentialities. Such institutions, creeds, and rituals often impede the will to serve others. Too often traditional faiths encourage dependence rather than independence, obedience rather than affirmation, fear rather than courage. More recently they have generated concerned social action, with many signs of relevance appearing in the wake of the "God Is Dead" theologies. But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.~~

— ~~**SECOND:** Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices. ...~~

THIRD: We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life's enrichment despite debasing forces of vulgarization,

commercialization, and dehumanization.

~~—**FOURTH:** Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses. There is no substitute: neither faith nor passion suffices in itself. The controlled use of scientific methods, which have transformed the natural and social sciences since the Renaissance, must be extended further in the solution of human problems. But reason must be tempered by humility, since no group has a monopoly of wisdom or virtue. Nor is there any guarantee that all problems can be solved or all questions answered. Yet critical intelligence, infused by a sense of human caring, is the best method that humanity has for resolving problems. Reason should be balanced with compassion and empathy and the whole person fulfilled. Thus, we are not advocating the use of scientific intelligence independent of or in opposition to emotion, for we believe in the cultivation of feeling and love. As science pushes back the boundary of the known, humankind's sense of wonder is continually renewed, and art, poetry, and music find their places, along with religion and ethics.~~

Today's desire to teach ethics in the class room without any mention of God nor of His Word fits very well into the Humanist religion.

The doctrine of self-esteem is bearing fruit. Who needs the Grace of God when you can build man up enough to live the good life in his own strength and power?

But Scripturally, there can be no basis for morality without the Christian faith.

Because the Christian faith has been abandoned by the family, and therefore, the schools, Christian morals and character have also been abandoned.

People have abandoned faith in God and in His higher moral law as found in His commandments. We have what is called a REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, and it is just that. The **leaders represent** the morals and character of the people. And the loss of faith in the God of the Bible and God's moral standard in the people is reflected in the leaders.

However, **faith is never actually lost.** Faith is only transferred to another person or thing. When men reject God and His word as their standard, they **accept Satan's promise** to Eve, that they can **be as gods**, not needing God's word for their standard.

Let me draw this to a close:

First, what will be the result of rearing a generation of kids who believe they can be a success in life without Christ?

Second, what will be the result of teaching kids that they can have these good character traits without the Spirit of God. Worse yet, what if they actually can develop these good traits without Christ? Will they then feel they do not need Christ.

Third, the natural result of these classes will be that the kids will believe **they are their own gods**. They are the ones who are in control, and they are the ones who decide what is right and what is wrong. They have NO MORAL standard to go by that is, the commandments of God.

Forth, what can we do?

Teach character at home and among those we associate with. Make it clear to those under our influence that character is not possible without Christ.

Note here that being a good person with lots of even Christian character does not guarantee heaven.

Matthew 7:21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many*

wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

As I said, Pastor Leonard gave me this book. So this last week, I called the company in Oklahoma City, OK. The lady who answered the phone assured me that they were not part of Gothard's organization. I told her that the material looked just like his, and she told me that they had separated from Gothard about three years ago.

The material put out by CHARACTER FIRST is purely SECULAR that is, without religious significance, or any mention of God.

The lady told me to log onto their web site, and I did.

The site opens with this statement:

We offer **character** based training, resources, and consulting to help SUCCEED in your business, school, and community.

And then on another page, they define character:

Character can be described in a variety of ways such as:

The inward motivation to do what is right
Who you are, even when no one is watching
The key to true success in every area of life

On another page, they list 49 **Character Qualities**:

Alertness	Diligence	Humility	Security
Attentiveness	Discernment	Initiative	Self-Control (The one I have)
Availability	Discretion	Joyfulness	Sensitivity
Benevolence	Endurance	Justice	Sincerity
Boldness	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Thoroughness
Cautiousness	Faith	Meekness	Thriftiness
Compassion	Flexibility	Obedience	Tolerance
Contentment	Forgiveness	Orderliness	Truthfulness
Creativity	Generosity	Patience	Virtue
Decisiveness	Gentleness	Persuasiveness	Wisdom
Deference	Gratefulness	Punctuality	
Dependability	Honor	Resourcefulness	
Determination	Hospitality	Responsibility	

I will not give you the entire list, but I will read a few:

They have a curriculum designed to fit into the nine-month school calendar, giving them 45 character traits they want to form in the kids.

Notice the sad thing here:

Though a large percentage of Americans claim to be Christians, the public schools feel they must teach character. Where are the **parents**? Where are the **churches**? The public schools are replacing the family on every front they have taken over the education of the children, a responsibility given to the parents, as well as the religious instruction.

The parents have failed to be parents. In fact, there was an article in Thursday's (2/7/02) paper, **Teacher resigns after plagiarism crackdown thwarted by school board**. A 26 year old biology teacher flunked 28 sophomores for plagiarizing their semester projects from the internet. Many parents complained to the school board, and the school board ordered her to compromise. She refused, and resigned.

In other words, the fault from the top to the bottom lies with the parents. They have failed to teach character. So these character training courses must take a very low keyed middle-of-the road approach, or the parents will be on the war path.

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The web site <<http://www.characterfirst.com/education/gettingstarted/emphasize.htm>> says that,

Many children have little concept of what words such as attentiveness, responsibility, or diligence actually mean, much less how such qualities apply to their personal lives.

And, sadly, the statement is true. Why is it true?

The web site <<http://www.characterfirst.com/education/gettingstarted/require.htm>> also says,

In many ways, character is more "caught" than "taught." Leaders who demonstrate good character provide a positive example children can follow.

Where do the parents fit in? What kind of character is being caught at home?

<<http://www.characterfirst.com/education/gettingstarted/recognize.htm>>

Daily Praise

Teaching character means not only correcting those who do wrong, but also praising those who do right.

This is a statement we must all agree with, but the picture is of a school teacher praising the child. Where are the parents?

<<http://www.characterfirst.com/education/gettingstarted/recognize2.htm>>

Public Recognition

Whether in front of the class or the entire school, praising students in front of their peers communicates the importance of character and motivates good behavior.

<<http://www.characterfirst.com/education/gettingstarted/recognize3.htm>>

Character Models

Look for historical and contemporary individuals to serve as positive role models for your students.

Celebrate the character of these men and women. Read their biographies, invite them to speak to your students, and pay tribute to the character that made them great.

What Others Say About *Character First!*

Kaiser Elementary School Located in northwest Oklahoma City, Kaiser Elementary School has a diverse student body of 330 children. Kaiser faced problems other inner-city elementary schools experience--class disruptions, disrespect, defiance. In 1997, however, Kaiser Elementary found a solution.

The assistant superintendent of Oklahoma City schools approached Kaiser's principal Lee Roland about piloting the newly-developed Character First! Education program. By the completion of a nine-week pilot program, Principal Roland and his staff had already seen a difference in the students. They unanimously agreed to continue using Character First!.

Four years later, Kaiser Elementary has witnessed improved student/teacher relationships, behavior, and academic excellence. Principal Roland attributes this success to having a systematic school-wide plan to address student attitudes and behaviors based on character.

"I have definitely seen benefits. Character First! is one of the best things that has ever happened to our school."

-Lee Roland, Kaiser Elementary

Now, sad to say, the public schools have had to take on character building out of self-defense.

This particular book has to do with SELF-CONTROL.

What is Character ?

4. The peculiar qualities, impressed by nature or habit on a person, which distinguish him from others; these constitute real character, and the qualities which he is supposed to possess, constitute his estimated character, or reputation. Hence we say, a character is not formed, when the person has not acquired stable and distinctive qualities. (Webster s 1828)

February 9, 2002

Letter to the Editor (Journal Review, Crawfordsville In):

I notice some signs going up around the county, CHARACTER COUNTS in Montgomery County. This is probably a program to promote character in different areas. But what is the basis of this character that is being promoted? It obviously cannot be the Ten Commandments, for they were removed from the county court house. So who now defines character ? Atheist? Muslim? Agnostic? Buddha? Confucius? Greek? Should not the ACLU be called in to define character, so no one will be offended?

The character in question cannot be Christian, for that will probably be forbidden by the commissioners, or they would have at least put up a fight over the Ten Commandments. After all, the ACLU may threaten to sue.

Can we expect the citizens of the county to have more character than the commissioners? Maybe the commissioners are the ones who need to take the Character Counts classes, for they did not have enough character to challenge the removal of the very definition of good character, the Ten Commandments.

Check out the <charactercounts.org> web site. I believe you will find that it promotes unlimited submission to all authority. Is that proper character?

It is sad, but I must admit that because the parents, in many cases, fail to teach good character, the state must take over the job and become the parent of those children. And thus the state defines what makes up good character.

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After the above letter to the editor appeared in the local paper, I received a phone call from a local school administrator who is, along with others, behind the county-wide push of Character Counts. In his attempt to justify their use of such a program, he told me that there are local churches having representatives in to speak about Character Counts, and that some are even using the curriculum. Sad to say, we deserve whatever God sees fit to send our way in judgment when churches fail to use His word as their basis for character training.