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Character of Christ: A Proposal for Excellence in Christian Character Education

Abstract

Moral teaching programs, such as character education, have been implemented nationwide in order to curb the growing trend of violence, abuse, and moral relativism within schools, both public and private. These programs represent a variety of moral training philosophies, and current research is revealing some "best practices" within the field. However, these programs do little to address the needs of distinctively Christian educators who seek to train their students toward the character of Jesus Christ. The research in this study promotes the development of a curriculum to meet this need. The following research indicates that character education's premise and many of its practices are worthy of consideration when developing a Christian character curriculum. However, the foundation of the character traits promoted by a Christian character curriculum must not be based on the consensus of a pluralistic society. The foundation must be established solely on the person of Christ. Best practices within the field of character education are emerging through current research. These practices and the theories behind them are also examined in light of the development of a Christian character curriculum. Recommendations and implications for a Christian character curriculum are made in both theory and practice.

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The Character of Christ

A Proposal for Excellence in Christian Character Education

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Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
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Department of Education
Dordt College
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July, 2007

The Character of Christ

A Proposal for Excellence in Christian Character Education

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Abstract

Moral teaching programs, such as character education, have been implemented nationwide in order to curb the growing trend of violence, abuse, and moral relativism within schools, both public and private. These programs represent a variety of moral training philosophies, and current research is revealing some “best practices” within the field. However, these programs do little to address the needs of distinctively Christian educators who seek to train their students toward the character of Jesus Christ. The research in this study promotes the development of a curriculum to meet this need.

The following research indicates that character education’s premise and many of its practices are worthy of consideration when developing a Christian character curriculum. However, the foundation of the character traits promoted by a Christian character curriculum must not be based on the consensus of a pluralistic society. The foundation must be established solely on the person of Christ.

Best practices within the field of character education are emerging through current research. These practices and the theories behind them are also examined in light of the development of a Christian character curriculum. Recommendations and implications for a Christian character curriculum are made in both theory and practice.

Introduction

A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping, we are becoming. —Ralph Waldo Emerson (Lewis, 2006, ¶ 1)

Educators who endeavor to train their students in character, in fact, set out to mold the very hearts and transform the very minds of the children they teach. They should not take lightly their calling to lead students toward the proper object of worship; for that which children esteem is what they will become.

The research within this study presents a case for character education with the unique goal of promoting the excellence of Christlike character in students. Existing character education curricula strive to train students toward “culture-like” character, teaching them to implement values accepted within a pluralistic community at large. However, Scripture admonishes Christian believers:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

Traditional character education, the following evidence argues, has sought to “conform” students to the pattern of the secular world, rather than to enable them to be “transformed” by the renewing of their minds. Although such training looks “good” to the public at large, Christian educators recognize the danger for students.

Christian schools and Christian educators who take their cues from the secular educational establishment tend to “sell their birthrights” (Genesis 25:29-34, Hebrews 12:16) before they even teach their first lesson. Consequently, transforming young minds into the mind of Christ becomes very improbable. (Fennema, 2005, p. 199)

Christian educators desire the “mind of Christ” for their students (I Corinthians 2:16). They seek the “exact representation” of God’s character, His Son, Jesus Christ, be “formed within” the children they teach (Hebrews 1:3, Galatians 4:19). Their goal is to see the character of Jesus Christ, His meekness, authority, and love manifested in their students’ lives (Frangipane, 2002). The argument presented herein is a proposal for excellence in character education—the development of a character curriculum directing students toward the Christian’s object of worship and source of character, the very image of God, Jesus Christ Himself.

This study presents an overview of the types of programs used to educate children in morality. Character education instruction is specifically examined in light of its foundations, its goals, and the specific character traits it promotes. This study also analyzes the merits and concerns of utilizing such education and outlines the need for a character education curriculum that focuses on the traits and person of Jesus Christ.

The proposed foundations for the development of such a curriculum are also outlined. The scope and sequence of this curriculum will focus on teaching three unique character traits of Christ, which are noticeably absent from other character curricula. These traits include humility, a lifestyle of prayer, and the promotion of unity.

The proposed methodology for this curriculum is based on current research of best educational practices within the field of character education. These methods are intended not only to instruct students in Christ's character, but to promote and encourage their actual conformity to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Training must not merely consist of concepts and ideas, but it must be centered in reality and take root within the heart of each student. "It seems to make...sense that a program intending to improve moral character would find a way to be a catalyst for those internal processes that lead to maturity and moral development" (Hogue, 2004, Part 1, ¶ 6).

Definition of Terms

The term *character* derives from the Greek, which indicates a distinctive mark or stamp (Power, 1997). It is defined as the "the main or essential nature" of a person, which strongly marks and distinguishes him or her (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Character is expressed through a set of traits (e.g. honesty, perseverance, responsibility); however, character is not simply the sum of these traits. In fact, "Character traits are not so much building blocks of good character—its 'foundations,' or 'bases'—as expressions of it." Character itself, rather, is the foundation, the "settled disposition" of the person. Once it is formed, character endures (Davis, 2003, p. 34).

Character education is the attempt to mold and form good character within students (Davis, 2003). The primary strategy used to shape such character is to directly instruct students in good character traits. In theory, this strategy seems somewhat backward, since by definition, traits do not influence character; rather, character determines traits. However, this is one among several tested strategies utilized by

character educators. This research will examine the most effective strategies used by character education programs, and purport a curriculum truly geared toward encouraging the “forming of Christ” within students (Galatians 4:19).

Summary of Literature in Character Education

Other Types of Moral Training

The education community recognizes three primary approaches to instructing children in principled behavior. These include moral education, “just community” education, and character education. While this research deals exclusively with character education, it is important to point out the distinctions among the three types and to examine them in light of the biblical truth which guides Christian education.

Moral Education

Moral education is somewhat like education in any other academic domain. Moral education teaches students through self-reflective activities and discussion (AME, 2007). It gives students the opportunity to apply what they know through identifying ethical dilemmas, discussing and verbally working through moral problems, and defending the conclusions at which they arrive. This type of education concentrates on the *process* of moral development, rather than on the final outcome. Since moral education focuses almost exclusively on the cognitive domain, it functionally isolates the spiritual needs of the student. In fact, critics note, “The only character trait it is likely to instill, if it instills any, is moral judgment, a kind of judiciousness” (Davis, 2003, p. 35). Although the cognitive development of students must be addressed, Christian educators should be wary of the exclusive practice of moral education. Such focus can lead students to head knowledge without heart knowledge, resulting in hypocrisy, rather than

Christlikeness. Jesus warned the Pharisees of the dangers of such learning, “You diligently study the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40). Christ is the source of eternal life. The scriptures simply point to Him. Study and head knowledge should be used as a means to an end, not the end itself.

Just Community Education

Like moral education, “just community” education also relies on a process for moral training; however, moral concepts are dealt with in a very different way. While moral education leads students to learn about already established values, the just community approach transforms the school into a sort of miniature democracy, in which students and teachers vote on moral, ethical, and conventional policies and carry them out within the school setting (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, 1989). The traits developed do not have as much to do with moral character as with citizenship in a democracy—responsibility, tolerance, desire for the common good, etc. The child is presented with experience in a democratic community and undergoes a sort of “apprenticeship” in order to gain experience and learn these traits. The just community approach is founded upon Kohlberg’s research of the stages of moral development within children (Table 1). In practice, this approach gives students ethical and moral dilemmas to think through within the school setting, enabling them to gain skill in moral reasoning and decision-making. The goal is that students become able to move to higher levels within Kohlberg’s stages. Research indicates that while students in the just community may be moving up in their moral reasoning in theory, they may not be living it out in practice. In other words, just community education can have an impact on decision making and reasoning skills, but it may do little to truly influence children’s behavior. Research has shown that some

students who display habitually delinquent behaviors actually score higher on Kohlberg's stages of moral development than their well-behaved peers, proving that abstract reasoning skills do not necessarily lead to moral action.

Because behaviors are not considered and reasoning is determined through hypothetical situations, children who behave in immoral ways may be able to answer hypothetical moral dilemmas in a more advanced fashion than better-behaved children who think less abstractly. Early criticisms of Kohlberg's lack of attention to behaviors led Kohlberg to add an emphasis on moral action to his Just Community educational program. For those who are looking for concrete help in developing moral values in children, however, Kohlberg's theory is still of little practical use. (Smith, 2007, Criticisms section, ¶ 2)

The Word of God speaks about this dilemma: "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good" (Titus 1:3). Christian educators desire that students be able to reason morally, but that their faith and actions work together, so that their faith might be made complete by what they do (James 2:22). Moral reasoning must be accompanied by an expectation of moral behaviors.

Summary of Moral and Just Community Education

Moral education and the just community approach rely heavily on the internal nature of the student to make moral and ethical decisions. The foundation for these decisions is not based on any taught standard; rather, the problem-solving process itself becomes the standard. Humanist psychologists explain that "man is constantly becoming... What we want, then, is not to encourage a static type of personality based on traditional notions of right and wrong, but the kind of person who is able to go forward

into the uncertain future” (Olim in Welch, Richards, and Tate, 1978, p. 219). The goal of these types of training is to produce a “self-actualized” student (Maslow, 1968, p. 5), or a person “in touch with his inherent goodness” (Noebel, 2001, p. 154).

Christian educators should not deny the value of allowing their students the practice of processing moral truth and having valuable experiences in social processes, such as democracy. These processes should be utilized within the Christian school (i.e., group discussions, student councils) under the directional leadership of Christian teachers and administrators. However, they must avoid use of these processes as exclusive methods of training. It is important that they recognize the danger of the humanistic thought behind moral and just community education. The practices these programs promote assume that man is inherently good and can therefore perfect himself. Scripture teaches that evil proceeds from the heart of man (Matthew 15:19) and that we, with no inherent goodness of our own (Isaiah 53:6), are to confess our sins (I John 1:9), be cleansed by Christ’s blood (I John 1:7), and conform to His image (Romans 8:29).

Character Education: A Defense

Character education is the foundation for this study. Unlike moral education and just community education, character education seeks to train students toward an existing standard of character. Character education is defined by Dr. Thomas Lickona (1991), prominent voice in the character education movement, as “the deliberate, proactive effort to develop good character in kids—or, more simply, to teach children right from wrong. It assumes that right and wrong do exist, that there are objective moral standards that transcend individual choice...and that we should teach these directly to young people”

(¶1). Christian educators hold this same assumption. They believe that God’s Word is His given standard and must be taught to children:

The Bible must be viewed as the final authority for all matters of faith and practice...All of God’s children, in one sense, need to become biblical scholars, for everything else in life depends on their understanding of the meaning of God’s Word for them and for their world. (Fennema, 2005, p. 169)

There is a given standard for the Christian. The proposed curriculum in this study will center around the unchanging standard of God’s Word and the person of Jesus Christ about whom it speaks (John 5:39).

Also unlike moral education and just community education, character education makes an undeniably bold claim—to actually mold the character of students. Other approaches only claim to improve the “moral atmosphere of the school and not the development of individual virtue and character” (Power, 1997, Just Community section, ¶ 3). Should education in Christlikeness really claim, as does character education, to mold the character of the student? Further research on this topic is presented in the proposal section. In truth, character transformation is not the work of the educator or the curriculum, but that of the Holy Spirit. However, through instruction, Christian educators can turn their students’ eyes toward His glory.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate [Or reflect] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (II Corinthians 3:18).

Character education seeks to train students toward an existing standard of righteousness. It also seeks to mold and shape the very character, or essential nature, of

the student. These are premises upon which a curriculum in Christlikeness must be founded. However, there are also some concerns about current character education which must not be overlooked before setting out to develop such a curriculum.

Character Education: Some Concerns

Character education curricula have become more widespread and popularly used within the past decade. Researchers note that some form of character education is taking place in every state in the nation. Many see its implementation as reactionary to recent school violence, while others view it as the latest in a long string of educational fads (Ferguson, 1999). However noble or ignoble its beginnings, character education, in its current state, raises certain issues of concern for Christian educators who seek to implement it in some form within their schools. The research examines both the source of the values promoted by character education programs and the ultimate goals of these programs. Both hold implications for the development of a Christian character curriculum.

The Foundation of Character Education

Concisely, character education is defined within the educational community as “teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect” (McBrien and Brandt, 1997, pp. 17-18).

Lickona notes that character education is founded upon “objective moral standards...like respect, responsibility, honesty, and fairness” (1991, ¶ 1). These educators have come to a conclusion regarding a set of “objective moral standards” or “basic human values” that children should be taught.

The question naturally follows—how do character curriculum proponents decide upon which values to teach? Where do the “objective moral standards” come from? The standards, for most character education curricula, are found in “community consensus” or commonly held beliefs within a given society. The Character Education Partnership calls character education “a national movement” that seeks to model and teach good character by emphasizing “universal values that we all share” (2001, p. 3). According to Dr. Lickona, “Most character education programs teach uncontroversial virtues such as responsibility and honesty. Such commonality is assured when virtues are drawn from community consensus. This process also demonstrates that almost all people recognize and acknowledge a natural moral law” (1991, p. 42). The current source of values taught within character education is based on “culturally accepted” practices and norms.

This basis for the teaching of character has been advocated by Christians and non-Christians alike. In his book, *The Abolition of Man*, Christian author C.S. Lewis (1944) researches writings from a variety of cultures worldwide and identifies what he calls the “Tao,” a universally-accepted path to being a good person. He advocates the direct teaching of these values, as opposed to allowing students to accept a moral relativism.

Christian educators might agree that some values teaching is better than none at all; however, such teaching is powerless to transform character. It may, as does moral and just community education, improve the existing school environment. However, students must actually behold the Lord’s glory to be transformed into His likeness (II Corinthians 3:18). They must observe the character of Christ, both directly taught and purposefully lived out, to become like Him. The goal of Christian education is that students be themselves transformed and equipped to transform culture. The Word of God

reveals Christ, and it penetrates, exposes, and discerns true character (Hebrews 4:12) and trains students in righteousness so they may be “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17). Cultural values cannot transform. “It is vitally important to remember that the Bible is to interpret and transform culture; culture is never to interpret and transform the Bible” (Fennema, 2005, p. 169).

Biblical history also speaks of a higher standard to which God’s people are called. The ancient Jewish culture acknowledged a system of fundamental laws, which rabbis called the “Seven Commandments given to the descendants of Noah”. These served a basic standard of acceptable practice within the nation of Israel (Hertz, 1960, p. 33). The “Seven Commandments” are similar to Lewis’ “Tao,” comprised of laws that are basic to societal existence. Interestingly, however, it was the non-Jews living within Israel who were required to follow only these general laws. Israelites themselves were required to follow *all* the precepts of the Torah. The Israelites were a distinct people, set apart as God’s chosen. As such, they were to reflect His glory and declare it “among the nations” (I Chronicles 16:24). In the same way, Christians are called to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus as we are being transformed into His image (II Corinthians 3:18). The curriculum proposal contained herein advocates training students toward their distinctive calling of Christlikeness.

Christian educators need not enter the fray of “community consensus,” “natural moral law,” or “widely accepted” beliefs of our day. The purpose of Christian education is defined in Christ Himself. Christian educators are called to make disciples and to lead students to think about all of life with Jesus’ thoughts (Greene, 1998). Dr. Lickona, while advocating “community consensus” character training in public schools, holds a

much higher standard for the training of character in Christian schools. “Character education can be defined as the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue... to develop, in both students and staff, the character of Christ” (2000, p. 259). For Christian educators, character principles taught are not based on democratic agreement but on the person of Christ. Author Frank Fenby, in his book, *Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education*, defines Christian character education:

The concept here is that the learner’s character, or manner of life is to be such that a person could easily mistake the learner as Jesus Himself. It is interesting to note that when we think of Jesus we seldom focus on His excellence in the cognitive domain but rather in the affective domain. It is not so much what Jesus knew, but how He lived that amazes us. So when we work to bring a learner to full maturity in Christ, we must be heavily involved in working on affective domain objectives. Knowledge of facts and methods is important. However, the ultimate aim of Christian Education is the development of the character of the learner (p. 11).

Christian education seeks to mold the character of each student into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The current source of values taught within traditional character education is based on “culturally accepted” practices and norms. Christian educators have the calling to clarify the source of character education in the person of Christ. They must base all character education on already defined standards found within the life of Jesus. Such a foundation more narrowly defines character education and provides a standard that transcends cultural differences and eliminates the shaky standard of “widely accepted” traits.

Character Education Traits

Character education advocates have identified some common traits they believe should be presented to students living in a multicultural society. Because these advocates promote “community consensus”, not all traits can be the same; however, several common traits have emerged among proponents. The Josephson Institute for Ethics identifies “six pillars of character” which provide a “common lexicon” for a diverse society attempting to train its children in character (2007, ¶ 2). These six pillars are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The Character Education Network has identified a similar, more detailed list of “the most common and broad-ranging group of character traits” (2007, ¶ 2). These are responsibility, perseverance, caring, self-discipline, citizenship, honesty, courage, fairness, respect, integrity, and patriotism.

“Community consensus” traits may sound good, even Christlike, to educators. However, they do not fully reflect the glory of Christ. In fact, some of the most prominent traits of Jesus Himself, such as humility and a lifestyle of prayer, are missing from these lists. Why? Humility and a lifestyle of prayer require honesty about our need before God. Men and women must acknowledge their dependence upon God and the desperate condition of their sinfulness before Him. Ultimately, goodness does not come from “within”, and adopting these character traits forces people to recognize their true sinful, weak, fallen state, and ultimately their need for Christ. The teaching of these “common traits” is precipitously rooted in the “inherent goodness of man,” the belief upon which moral and just community education are founded. Conversely, scripture teaches that there is no one righteous, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10, 23). Because of the underlying secular assumptions about inherently

good character (and the very real tendency to close our hearts and hide our sin), many of the character traits to which Jesus calls His followers are notably absent from this list.

It is also important to note that history teaches that these “widely accepted” values often align with popularly held beliefs of the day, resulting in negative consequences for future generations. Until the late 19th century, slavery was “widely accepted by the white population” in America. George Washington was one of the largest slaveholders in Virginia during the late 1700s. Although he had personal reservations about slavery, he did not publicly speak out against it, and often legislated in its favor. Since he grew up in such a culture, many have argued that he should not be held accountable for his slaveholding lifestyle and political inaction. “This perspective maintains that we should not impose twentieth century values on eighteenth century people and blame them for violating what are only recently accepted as human rights” (Pfiffner, 2001, pp. 3-12). Yet men and women of faith in Washington’s day, who held to the constant standard of Jesus Christ, were encouraging the President that his “example and influence at this time, towards a general emancipation, would be as productive of real happiness to mankind.” They urged him to “finally transmit to future ages a Character, equally Famous for thy Christian Virtues, as thy word]y achievements...” (Pleasants, 1785, ¶ 2). Had President Washington held to his unchanging “Christian Virtues” rather than to popular belief, his incredible influence may well have encouraged our nation peacefully toward freedom and away from the horrors of a great Civil War that would only violently settle the question. Christian educators, in their leadership roles, must hold to the character of Jesus Christ and educate their students to do the same. He is the only unchanging standard of excellent character that will prove true, both now and forever.

Nearly all of the traits presented in other character curricula are also commanded in Scripture. Honor, courage, and integrity reflect righteousness and may certainly find a place in any Christian character curriculum. These values have a place in our students' lives and the societies in which they live. Yet, in order to train students toward the goal of Christlikeness, this limited list leaves out some of the most important virtues upon which all other virtues depend. If students do not have humility, they cannot recognize their need for all other virtues. If students do not embrace a lifestyle of prayer, they cannot access the power by which to live a virtuous life. If students do not practice and promote unity, they will not honor others or find value in citizenship.

Christlike Traits

Christian experts in the field of character education note that “moral training” in the values listed above must be accompanied by “spiritual training” in values unique and distinct to Christ Himself. Lickona advocates training in thirteen such values, including “a humility that acknowledges our total dependence on God, seeks God's graces in all we do, and is grateful for all of God's blessings” and “personal prayer”. He also advocates the development of “a moral and spiritual community in which all members support and care for each other” (2000, p. 259). Similarly, in his book *The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character*, Gardiner Spring outlines several character traits that are “evidenced in the true sons of God” as they are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. These include “evangelical humility”, “the spirit of prayer”, and “brotherly love” (1999). Students should thus be called to embody character traits of humility, a lifestyle of prayer, and the promotion of unity, as did Jesus Himself.

First, Jesus embodied humility. Even though Jesus could have relied on His inherent goodness, he did not. We are called to be like Him. The Apostle Paul writes:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made Himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:1-4)

Research indicates that while humility is a prominent character trait of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not highly valued within traditional character education curricula. However, humility is the essence of character education. In truth, no other virtue enters our lives, except that humility bids it come. It is a willingness to view our own character in light of the truth, that we might honestly acknowledge our need for good character. Humility “consists in a just view of our own character, and in a disposition to abase ourselves as low as the vileness of our character requires us to lie” (Spring, 1999, Evangelical Humility section, ¶ 1). In fact, without humility, even the virtues we have will “harden into lifeless statues within the sanctuary of our hearts” (Frangipane, 2002, Humility, p. 6). We can make no spiritual progress without being humble. Of all the virtues, Jesus places humility above all others. He says that the humble are the “greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:4). Humility causes God to look upon us with favor (Isaiah 66:2) and releases all of the other virtues in our lives to function in truth and freedom.

Humility also makes possible our submission to authority. Jesus was the perfect example of humble honor for authority. He did nothing without the Father's approval. Everything He said and did was just as His Father told Him (John 8:28; 12:50). Even though Jesus knew His status before the Father (John 13:13), He willingly submitted under earthly authority, knowing that God Himself had established it (John 19:11). The beauty of humble submission enables students to receive from their parents, their teachers, and ultimately from God. Humility and honor of authority are a true test of one's character. "He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him" (John 7:18).

Jesus also embodied a lifestyle of prayer. He often went to "solitary places" to pray and would "spend the night in prayer" (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16). He taught his disciples to pray. In contrast, traditional character education acknowledges the inherently good authority of the community at large, rather than that of a higher power.

By prayer we acknowledge God's power and goodness, our own neediness and dependence. It is therefore an act of the virtue of religion implying the deepest reverence for God and habituating us to look to Him for everything, not merely because the thing asked be good in itself, or advantageous to us, but chiefly because we wish it as a gift of God, and not otherwise, no matter how good or desirable it may seem to us. (Wynne, 1911, Prayer, ¶ 1)

Prayer, like humility, causes us to acknowledge our deep need and to receive our righteousness from God alone. Prayer seeks nothing of self or for self; but the deepest

appeal of the heart is to simply receive from God. Such a lowly appeal to the authority of a higher power is not readily presented in traditional character education programs.

Finally, Jesus embodied the attribute of unity. He Himself was one with His Father, and He prayed that His disciples and the church would be one (John 17). While individual freedom and “fairness” are valued in most character curricula, Jesus prayed that His followers would be one. The church is even compared to a physical body, in which uniquely individual members must function together as one (I Corinthians 12:12). When one member of the body suffers, all members suffer with it. This certainly does not reflect “fairness”. Rather, it equips students to use their unique gifts to function as one body and reflect the unity of the Godhead to the world.

The Goal of Character Education

The ultimate goal of character education is that of raising children to “become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens” (McBrien and Brandt, 1997, pp. 17-18). Trained to societal “norms”, students will become citizens who can live responsibly in their given societies. It is likely that students trained toward the standards of community consensus will fit well into the general public and be able to function with relative social ease. Effective character education, then, seeks to produce good citizens. Social conformity and citizenship, however, are goals unworthy of followers of Jesus Christ. Those whom the world “loves as its own” belong to the world, and not to Christ (John 15:19). Christ has chosen His followers “out of the world”, and the world will not love them as its own.

When students achieve this goal of social conformity, their reward will also come from the community. They will be rewarded and “reinforced by the good feelings in others” (McDaniel, 1998, ¶ 15). Such a reward is volatile and changes with the whims of

individuals in society. For the Christian educator, the goal must reach far beyond social prowess and responsibility, and the reward must never be sought in the approval of men. Jesus told His followers, “How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44). To obtain God’s praise, our students must be formed into the Image of the One in whom God was “well pleased” and on whom He placed His “seal of approval” (Matthew 3:17, John 6:27). Christian educators’ goal is to see Christlikeness formed in their students and to see them receive the eternal reward of Jesus’ character and of God’s approval.

The Goal of Christian Character Education

The goal of Christian character education is unique and distinct. In fact, it is summed up as the goal of the entirety of Christian education. “Full conformity to the image of God in Christ—his Christ-likeness—is the goal of Christian education” (Horton, et al, 2005, Purpose section, ¶ 3). It is the full development of His character within students, preparing them to think about all of life with His thoughts. Christian educators are committed to the goal of full conformity to Christ within their students. Fred Hanko (1995), in his article “The Goals of Protestant Reformed Education”, acknowledges what he terms the “ultimate goal” of developing Christlike character in students with Ephesians 4:13: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Christian character education, then seeks not to produce socially conformed citizens, but men and women conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, distinct and unique within their culture.

Proposal for a Curriculum in Christlike Character

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

–*Proverbs 22:6*

Do not exasperate your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. –Ephesians 6:4

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. –1 Timothy 4:8

Definition of Terms/Foundational Recommendations

Education is an encompassing term referring to the knowledge or skill obtained or developed by a learning process (American Heritage Dictionary, n.d.). Education broadly encompasses both metacognition and more specific, goal-oriented training. Some experts in the field of moral education have adopted a focus on metacognition alone, while denying the value of training. Fennema (2005) warns against this: “Each theory of learning tends to focus on one aspect of biblical knowing and absolutize it—building the entire theory around the one aspect or facet of what, indeed, is true” (p. 172). This proposal recommends the development a character curriculum that is “holistic and transforming” (Fennema, 2005, p. 172), including both metacognitive and training strategies.

Metacognition is the process by which students “think about thinking” or “learn how to learn.” They begin to understand how their own thought processes work, and they utilize this understanding to their advantage, in order to learn more efficiently.

Metacognition refers to higher order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning. Activities such as planning how to approach a given learning task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task are metacognitive in nature. Because metacognition plays a critical role in successful learning, it is important to study metacognitive activity and development to determine how students can be taught to better apply their cognitive resources through metacognitive control.

(Livingston, 1997, ¶ 1)

Metacognition is a valuable skill as students learn how to reason biblically, while utilizing solid scriptural truth to confirm or deny their reasoning. It must, therefore, find an important place in a curriculum in Christlikeness, especially for upper elementary and middle school students, who are beginning to utilize these skills more effectively.

However, specialists in the field of moral education believe that metacognitive activities should be the primary strategy used to educate students in moral behavior. Researchers on moral development, such as Kohlberg, Piaget, Kohn, and others believe that a “more indirect approach to moral reasoning will lead students to embrace the important virtues that traditionalists would impose directly” (Liermann, 1999, p. 10). They emphasize the need for engaging students in discussion and activities that bring about moral reflection. Kohn goes so far as to say that to teach values in a specific, instructional way (rather than giving students the freedom to engage in deep critical reflection about moral issues) is tantamount to indoctrination. (1997, ¶ 5)

The reflective process of metacognition must be utilized within character education, but it cannot be the exclusive method of teaching. If man were “innately

good,” metacognition would work every time. However, good character “traits...and virtues are not innate,” and they must be directly taught (Benninga and Wynne, 1998, p. 440). Students cannot consistently rely on their own reasoning to determine appropriate moral action. They must be trained to distinguish good from evil, utilizing the Word of God and the unchanging standard of Jesus Christ.

Training is distinguished from metacognitive activity in its methods and its purpose. Training is to “develop or form the habits, thoughts, or behavior of (a child or other person) by discipline and instruction” (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Training, with its emphasis on *discipline* (teaching expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior) and *instruction* (detailed directions given by one with greater knowledge) is both rigorous and precise. In their various forms, the terms *training*, *discipline*, and *instruction* are found a total of 215 times in the scriptures. In these processes, God deals with His people in a very specific way, and He commands parents and teachers to do the same. Training involves striving toward a defined moral standard upon which students are called to act. In other words, character educators instruct students directly about character traits and expect them to conform to these traits. Students can then exercise metacognitive problem-solving and reasoning skills within their growing attainment of Christlike character. Training results in the transforming of students into the image of Christ and prepares them, not only to reason morally, but to “stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

Both training and metacognitive skills must find their way into a character education program. Students must be trained toward the standard of Christ, and learn

how to utilize the mind of Christ toward which they have been trained. The following is a proposal for this type of “holistic and transforming” education in Christlike character.

Whole Program Recommendations

Upon implementation of any curriculum in Christlikeness, one truth must be understood: The traits of Christ can only be brought forth and developed by the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. Teachers are powerless to do this work. It comes from the Spirit of God. However, teachers have an important role in the formation of Christ’s character within their students: Scripture indeed assumes that the character, skills, and knowledge requisite for the ministry *can* be taught, but only in a distinctively “Spiritual” way (Frame, 2001, Qualifications section #1). Christian educator, Dr. Jack Fennema (2005) writes:

To act like Jesus, then, one must be like Jesus. Sanctification by the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit. To grow in sanctification, one must personally surrender and bend one’s knee in homage to Jesus Christ as Savior and as Lord. Parents and teachers are to teach these lessons often, through example and verbal instruction. They need to challenge their children to commit their hearts, minds, and lives to Jesus. They should encourage them to remain in the Vine. They must pray for all of this daily, for it cannot be learned cognitively; it must be experienced from above. (p. 132)

This spiritual training must be applied using excellent, proven teaching methods and strategies. These include the authenticity of teachers, professional development, integration, and a holistic presentation of character.

Authenticity of Teachers

The term “modeling” has been used to describe one of the components of an effective character education program. Modeling is defined as teaching by deliberate example, or behaving in a certain way in order to serve as an example (Davis, 2003). Research shows that modeling is one of the important elements that make a character education curriculum successful (Berkowitz and Bier, 2005). It is clear that students must see Christlikeness before them in the school setting. However, there is an even higher standard for Christian teachers. Christlikeness cannot merely be “modeled”. Teachers cannot simply act a certain way for the express purpose of teaching students to act as such. This is hypocrisy. Jesus strongly condemned this form of teaching: “On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” He warned his own disciples to be wary of it: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Matthew 23:2, 28). The bottom line is that teachers must be real. Students are willing to follow a genuine teacher. Researchers have identified some components of what real teachers look like: They explain what makes their role relevant to their students; They are open and honest about their relevant personal history, highlighting those elements that their students are likely to share; They are honest in speaking about their strengths and weaknesses; and they help their students see how they could attain that which they are modeling (Christlikeness) by being straightforward about barriers and how they overcame them (Barker and Cohoon, 2006). Christlike teachers will open themselves to their students by being real, being relevant, and showing them how to overcome in Christ (Romans 12:21). These teachers will not hesitate to engage students in open discussion

about Christlike character and what it really means to serve Jesus—to wrestle in prayer, to confess their sins, to suffer intolerance for Jesus' sake and to pray the mercy prayer for those who persecute them. Such Christlike teachers and role models do not come to our schools naturally. They themselves must undergo training.

Professional Development

Berkowitz and Bier observe that professional development is the most critical area of investment in character education—ranking it above curriculum and all other physical resources. The most effective character education programs implement some form of professional development. Often in such programs, professional development is not merely optional but is required, and substantive support materials and training experiences are provided (2005, p. 25). Schools should invest time, substitute teachers, support for learning, the development of professional learning communities, and the use of consultants for teacher training. What does this mean for a curriculum in Christlikeness? As with modeling, Christlike teachers must go beyond professional development. Teaching Christlikeness cannot only come from technique or strategy, it must be imaged upon the hearts of the teachers themselves. Teachers must be trained in Christlikeness and themselves seek hard after Christ. Certainly, they should receive instruction in the implementation of a character curriculum; however, it must be preceded by training from spiritual leaders, who walk in some measure of Christlikeness now. They serve as “fathers” and mothers on the teachers' behalf through the gospel (I Corinthians 4:15-16). The goal of this training is not teachers who merely teach doctrines, but teachers who pour themselves into their students. Spiritual impartation, not just knowledge, is the goal of training in Christlikeness. Teachers should emerge from such training with more spiritual power, more courage to stand and fight for

righteousness, eyes to see God's goodness when all around is darkness, and the ability to stand in Christ-centered unity (Frangipane, 2002). These teachers, fully trained, will teach not only by their words, but also by their lives. This is not just another form of teaching, but it is rather an extension of the spoken word; for the most effective models are teachers in whom the word of God has taken root. They proclaim it in power (Frame, 2001). Teachers must first receive from this type of training so they can impart it.

Spiritual leaders can be sought out in the community of faith (local churches, pastors, lay leaders) and asked about their willingness to train and mentor Christian teachers. One such recommended training program (In Christ's Image Training) for adults has already been implemented to teachers in a Christian school and in numerous Sunday schools, taught in small group studies, and is available for others seeking such training. It is recommended that any professional development program geared toward Christian character education should have two parts: 1) training in Christlikeness from spiritual leaders and mentors; and 2) training in methods of implementing character education curriculum in the classroom.

Integration

Research in this area of character education is well-documented. Character education must be inclusive, cross-curricular, and fully integrated in order to be successful. Programs that are simply added onto the existing curriculum seem artificial to both students and staff, and usually do not last long (Helwig, 1997). Profound character education involves managing classrooms or whole schools so that they will advance student character (Benninga and Wynne, 1998). But how is character education successfully integrated into the existing school structure? The answer for some is, quite naturally. Character researchers and educators Don Jacobs and Jessica Spencer (2001)

have developed a cross-curricular program for teachers to easily integrate character training into every aspect of the curriculum. They claim that, with their approach, teachers will not have to discard existing lesson plans, but can “revisit” them with the purposeful intention to include character development. The variety of teaching strategies may need to be increased to give more opportunities to embed virtues within each lesson, but teachers can easily and successfully integrate character learning throughout the school day. Such teaching makes values relevant to real life, rather than separating them as extraneous in the minds of students. The Jacobs-Spencer “Conceptual Model for Character Education” (Figure 1) serves as a modifiable suggestion for the development of a curriculum in Christlikeness. Their approach has merit in that they believe that spirituality pervades the entire process of learning that leads to good character and that every lesson has value toward character development. They recommend that in each lesson, teachers have an academic goal and a character goal for their students. Take, for example, a history lesson about the Corps of Discovery. The academic goal might be: “Students will learn how planning and resources were used to make Lewis and Clark’s journey a success.” The character goal might be: “Students will see the diversity of the Corps of Discovery (Native American, Negro slave, white settlers) and learn how God granted them success as they served in Christlike unity.” This type of integration must find its place within a Christian character curriculum. It requires both teachers and students to find the attributes of Christ in everything and to regard all of learning with a pure heart. It enables school communities to constantly think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8) and to fix their eyes on Jesus.

Holistic Presentation

Effective character education is not only fully integrated, it is also holistic. These two ideas, while utilized in conjunction with each other, are not synonymous. Integration is a way of presenting character across the curriculum. Holistic character education presents character as a whole concept and does not functionally isolate individual traits. While individual traits are directly taught and discussed, they are seen as parts of the whole, and not the whole itself. In some character education programs, traits are presented one at a time and each particular trait is singled out as the trait of the month/week/day. Students are taught this trait for the specified time frame and are often rewarded when they exhibit it. Afterward, teachers move on to the next character trait to be learned, returning to the other traits by way of simple review. With this method, students may learn each trait well and how it should be exhibited; however, they are not instructed in discernment and wholeness of character. Such training compartmentalizes character and gives a narrow view of what good character looks like. Character curriculum, rather, must expand the scope of character education to encompass the whole of life (Devine, Seuk, and Wilson, 2001). What does this mean for a curriculum in Christlikeness? Traits can and should be presented individually and clearly defined. However, the curriculum must provide for successive levels of understanding and discernment. Researchers recommend several strategies: 1) While studying about great men and women, openly discuss the subject of personal weakness--especially in the upper grades (Study of a person's "whole" character can provide a powerful lesson in discernment and compassion); 2) Observe and discuss current TV shows, websites, and advertisements, and discuss the worth and bias in each; 3) Role-play and journal about real-life dilemmas that require more than one character trait to be utilized, giving students

the opportunity to utilize their moral understanding (Ryan and Bohlin, 2007). As often as possible, follow each discussion up with a biblical basis for the answers given by students. Inform students that if God's Word does not back up our reasoning, we must change our reasoning to line up with truth. Moral discernment does not come from our reasoning skills or "inherent goodness", and teachers must return to the standard to be sure that their logic is biblically sound. In this way, students will gain knowledge and insight and will be able to discern. The prayer of Christian teachers for their students should be like that of Paul:

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)

Specific Goals of Training for Students: Know, Do, and Desire the Good.

This section outlines three successive goals for training students in Christlikeness. While general methods for accomplishing each of the three goals are suggested, the premise of this research is to establish foundations and far-reaching goals for a curriculum in Christlikeness. The goals are far-reaching and should be referenced throughout the curriculum, and the methods can be used when developing lessons and activities for any of the character traits presented.

Thomas Lickona (1993) has observed that good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. The "good" students are encouraged to

strive toward is Christlikeness. For the purposes of this curriculum, the order of these goals may be changed slightly to knowing the good, doing the good, desiring the good. This progression more accurately reflects Jesus' command: "If you are truly my disciples, you will obey what I command. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). This series of developmental goals serves as foundation for training in Christlikeness: 1) Directly teach Christlike traits, that students might know the good; 2) Provide opportunities for practice and service, that students might do the good; 3) The result will be a student who desires the good.

Know the Good -- Directly Teach Christlike Traits

Character educators believe that values should be directly taught to students. Direct instruction must come first. Long before students can discern between right and wrong, and even before they can act on what they know is right, they must be directly taught what is right. Brooks and Kann (1993) observe:

The teaching of character values must be purposeful and direct. Students should hear and see the words, learn their meanings, identify appropriate behaviors, and practice and apply the values. Direct instruction builds a foundation for more advanced learning infused throughout the general curriculum; even then, direct instruction is necessary for infusion to be focused and effective. (p. 19)

Wilson (1990) also advocates this direct teaching, adding the elements of showing students how to implement these values in real life and giving them moral questions to gauge their understanding. Instruction in prayer, then, should include 1) a direct teaching on the term and its definition; 2) a story, skit, or other descriptive means to show students how prayer is practiced in a variety of real life situations; and 3) moral questions or dilemmas to which student would have to apply prayer in order to see God's hand in their

resolution. Following this initial instruction, continual lessons incorporating humility, prayer, and unity should be infused throughout the curriculum. However, when each Christlike trait is first presented to students, additional time must be taken to identify the trait and define it so students can easily recall, identify, and practice each characteristic within daily activities.

Do the Good -- Obey and Practice Christlike Traits

Once children have learned what Christlike character looks like, they will begin to practice it. Christian educators must end the trend of underestimating this generation of young people. They must teach humility and expect to see acts of humble service, as well as repentance, forgiveness and restoration within their students and schools. They must teach a lifestyle of prayer and expect to see their students praying together in classrooms and hallways. They must teach the promotion of unity and expect to see students loving and serving one another across (even eliminating) denominational barriers. Teachers should begin with this expectation and provide many opportunities for students to practice Christlikeness. Service learning within character education programs has been documented as a highly effective strategy in at least seven separate studies (RMC Research Corp, 2006). Results of service learning include the following: increased respect between teachers and students, improvement in interpersonal development, learning character education skills, and an increased sensitivity toward and ability to relate to diverse groups. Service learning was especially successful among students who had been previously diagnosed with longstanding emotional and behavioral needs—Students with “egos that [could not] perform” proved the experts wrong and showed an increasing development in self-control as they served others” (Muscott, 2001, p. 91). When students are trusted and expected to act upon what they have learned, the

transformation of their character will follow. Teachers can instruct and model, but students will truly come to understand by doing. As Confucius observed, “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” Within a Christian character education curriculum, teachers must provide opportunities for students to act upon the Christlike traits presented to them. These opportunities may include forming prayer groups in which students come together in unity to bear each others’ burdens; asking students to have lunch with “unpopular” or struggling classmates; and organizing service projects within the school and community. Suggestions for developing and integrating character education and service learning in a Christian character curriculum are included (see Appendix B).

Desire the Good

What is the result of training students to know the good and to do the good? Concisely, it is students who desire the good. They think about all of life with Jesus’ thoughts, understand the good, and want to do right from a pure heart. This process takes a biblical view of character training. As previous research indicates, experts in the field of moral education believe moral teaching should be sequentially different. They think children will first desire the good (because of their inherent goodness), then they will know it and act on it. These educators want children to engage in the higher order of thinking about morality before the morality itself finds its outworking in the child. In other words, they believe that beliefs precede actions (Pascoe, 2002). They claim a child should believe something is the morally right thing to do; then, s/he will carry it out. In theory, this kind of education sounds logical. Adults tend to act on what they believe. However, when it comes to the training of children, these experts may well have the cart before the horse. Scripture indicates, as does some recent research (including Kohlberg’s

stages of moral development), that in children, actions precede beliefs. Children who act on the good which they know primarily in *fact* (which they have been trained to do), will graduate into an understanding of why their actions are good; then, they will perform virtuous acts independently when training of the heart takes root.

Children first learn how to act morally, and then they learn how to think morally.

Thus, the two phases of moral training include: (1) the development of moral behavior, and (2) the development of moral reason. Actions in young children come first; understanding follows. (Ezzo and Ezzo, 2001, p. 18)

Once students understand and desire the good, the goal has been achieved. Students will act morally on their own because they want to, not because they are required to. This does not mean they will not have to be reminded to exhibit these virtues. Peter exhorted the church in a variety of Christlike virtues, then added, “So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have” (II Peter 1:12). It is the duty of teachers to continually exhort their students and refresh their memories (II Peter 1:13).

The pattern of “know the good, do the good, desire the good” has proven effective in the implementation of character education within the school setting. Singh’s (2001) well-documented research of her own character education program with first graders indicates this fact. She surveyed 21 of her students and found that more than half were unable to define the select character traits and to give examples of times when they had demonstrated each virtue. She believed they had the capacity to act on them, but could not readily identify them. Singh then implemented a program in which these terms were readily used within the classroom (“knowing the good”). Next, role-playing, cooperative

learning, and classroom service activities (“doing the good”) were implemented to train students within them. Her findings showed that 90% of her students showed an increased understanding of these traits, the majority of negative classroom behaviors were eliminated, and students were working through their own issues more often (desiring the good). Singh encouraged the actions as a large part of her early training, and the understanding of these actions followed.

Some Additional Thoughts Regarding Implementation

Format

Research recommends that effective character education be both holistic and presented across the curriculum. *A Guide for Developing Interdisciplinary Thematic Units* (Roberts and Kellough, 2004) provides both rationale and practical how-to ideas for this type of curriculum development. It would also be beneficial for developers of this curriculum to undergo training in the construction of thematic units. Inservice workshops and college courses offer a more hands-on experience in curriculum development and unit planning.

Rewards

The subject of “rewarding good behavior” often comes up in discussions about character education curriculum. Should teachers promote some type of reward system for good behavior? Should the rewards be entirely intrinsic? Research on this practice is limited, but opinions are abundant. In light of a Christian character curriculum, the following recommendations are offered.

If used, rewards should be used only to reinforce behavior, never to stimulate it. According to Lickona, one important goal of character education is to develop students’

intrinsic motivation (Appendix A, #7). Students should not come to expect any reward, but should be allowed to experience the joy of serving others and knowing, by faith, that they are pleasing Christ. As teachers deem it appropriate, students may certainly be rewarded for reinforcement purposes and enjoy the unexpected pleasure of an encouraging word or a small tangible reminder. Scripture admonishes us to encourage one another and to build one another up (I Thessalonians 5:11). Teachers must always find appropriate ways to give their students such encouragement.

Students should not be required to “wear” their rewards as a badge of honor. Some programs advocate the wearing of buttons or stickers proclaiming students’ adherence to character traits (i.e., “I was responsible today.”). It is difficult to imagine such a badge for Christlikeness (“I was humble today.”). Christlikeness would not flaunt its righteousness before men, but would come to desire the true reward that comes from God (Matthew 6:1).

Any rewards given should be appropriate to the behavior being rewarded. For example, a diligent effort and a job well done might be rewarded with an unexpected break from work or payment for the job. When it comes to excellent character, however, the reward usually comes in the form of a word of encouragement or a smile. Tangible rewards should be rare, because they cannot be logically connected to the transforming of the heart. Humility and prayer may be quietly noticed and encouraged. Unity may be encouraged and rewarded for a whole class, who displays this by working together in Christ.

Whole School or Single Classroom?

This curriculum would be best developed as a school-wide curriculum. Given the importance of these character traits and the developmental differences in moral thinking

(Table 1), this curriculum should be considered and appropriately developed for K-12 education. However, as Singh (2001) proved in her implementation of a character education program, sound character education can be successfully carried out within the individual classroom. The curriculum might first be developed at a single grade level and implemented for testing purposes. Then, if successful, other grades could develop and implement curriculum to meet their students' developmental needs.

Discussion

Summary

Character education research provides a viable starting point for development of curriculum in Christlike character. It is founded on the idea that there exist unchanging principles upon which training is based. Character education seeks primarily to train (instruct and discipline) students in good character, rather than to rely on the volatile, still developing mind of the student to decide morality for himself. There are, however, drawbacks to this form of instruction. The character traits presented within character education are based on the general consensus of society, rather than on the unchanging nature of Christ. Character education seeks to produce good citizens who fit well within society. Christian character education must truly reflect Christ, in order that students might be transformed into His image, rather than conformed to the world.

Conclusion

Implications

The proposed curriculum in Christlikeness should be "holistic and transforming." It cannot isolate one educational theory over another but must be comprehensive and far-

reaching. This curriculum must contain elements of both metacognitive strategies, such as problem-solving, and training activities, such as direct instruction and practice. A holistic curriculum will more effectively encourage and equip the whole student to be conformed to the image of Christ.

This curriculum must be founded upon research-based best practices within character education. Teachers must be authentic, Christlike role models. They must be willing to submit to training in Christlikeness themselves as well as receive training in how to implement the curriculum within a classroom setting. The character curriculum itself should be integrated across the entirety of the curriculum and should present character as a whole concept, not merely as individual traits, enabling students to discern what Christlikeness looks like in all areas of life.

Students should be directly taught Christlike character traits and see them lived out within their school, so that they will know the good they should do. Opportunities for service learning and active participation should be abundant, that students might do the good and learn through their actions. The result will be students who desire the good and act upon it both in and out of the classroom.

General recommendations for curriculum development include a variety of suggestions. First, teachers should be trained in interdisciplinary thematic unit development and utilize resources appropriate to such planning. Character education that truly promotes Christlikeness must train the whole student. Teachers must learn how to make Christlikeness training “holistic and transforming” and to implement it effectively across the curriculum. Second, teachers may choose to use rewards with caution, based on the suggestions offered. Finally, teachers may implement this curriculum within a

single classroom; however, its ideal implementation would be within the whole-school setting.

Limitations

First, a curriculum in Christlikeness would most likely be reserved for distinctively Christian schools and/or church related programs. However, it is important to note that the spirits of the age are causing a greater number of schools to seek out some type of moral training for their students. Upon examination, public educators may want to use portions of this curriculum in their classrooms. The traits of humility and unity may be appealing to secular educators as stand-alone units. Yet, apart from the authority of Christ, such implementation is bound to be ineffective. Educators must be real, committed Christian believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, to most effectively implement these truths, especially in the secular school setting.

Second, the majority of the research base in evaluating effective character education is very recent (within the last five years). Only now are truly research-based evaluation procedures being implemented to determine effectiveness of character education. When implementing this curriculum, then, it will be important to seek out the very latest methods of evaluating the curriculum's effectiveness. Since Christlike character education is not widely used, teachers should utilize the latest research and come up with their own evaluation procedures to determine the curriculum's effectiveness.

Finally, the unchanging standard of Christlikeness does not imply that the curriculum itself cannot develop and change. Best practices and current research must always be taken into consideration, and the curriculum must change as need is

determined. On the other hand, change must not be implemented simply for the sake of change. Any new idea or strategy must be examined in light of biblical truth and the unchanging nature of Christ before it is implemented.

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Appendix A

Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education

Standards by which to plan and assess a character education program

Thomas Lickona

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. Character must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school must be a caring community.
5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.
6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.
8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
9. Character education requires moral leadership for both staff and students.
10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.
11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

*From: Eleven principles of effective character education by Thomas Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Catherine Lewis, *Social Studies Review*, v37 n1 p29-31 Fall-Win 1997

Appendix B

Suggestions for Developing and Integrating Character Education and Service-Learning at Your School

- Canvas the community to understand their needs and willingness to work with K-12 students.
- Define character education clearly and comprehensively so that all participants share a common vision and mission.
- Involve students, family members, school staff, and community members in the process.
- Train school personnel in character education and service-learning so that the activities are of high quality and positive outcomes are more likely to occur.
- Infuse character education and service-learning into every aspect of the school culture and curriculum so that both are viewed as essential rather than as add-ons.
- Develop agreements for student and community participation in service-learning so that expectations are clear from the beginning.
- Encourage all adults participating in service-learning projects to model the core values adopted by your school.
- Design student materials and orientation processes for service-learning so that students can understand and play important roles in planning and implementing activities.
- Reinforce the connection between service-learning, core values, and the curriculum through written and oral reflection opportunities for all participants.
- Conduct an evaluation to assess and understand the program's effectiveness and use the information to improve.
- Share your experiences and best practices with other schools so that more schools become involved in character education and service learning and program quality is improved.

***From:** *Character Education and Learning*, RMC Research Corporation, September 2006.

Table 1

The Stages of Moral Reasoning

THE STAGES OF MORAL REASONING* (Ages indicate reasonable developmental expectations for a child of normal intelligence growing up in a supportive moral environment.)		
STAGE 0: EGOCENTRIC REASONING (preschool years – around 4)	WHAT'S RIGHT: REASON TO BE GOOD:	I should get my own way. To get rewards and avoid punishments.
STAGE 1: UNQUESTIONED OBEDIENCE (around kindergarten age)	WHAT'S RIGHT: REASON TO BE GOOD:	I should do what I'm told. To stay out of trouble.
STAGE 2: WHAT'S-IN-IT-FOR ME FAIRNESS <i>(early elementary grades)</i>	WHAT'S RIGHT: REASON TO BE GOOD:	I should look out for myself but be fair to those who are fair to me. Self-interest: What's in it for me?
STAGE 3: INTERPERSONAL CONFORMITY (middle-to-upper elementary grades and early-to-mid teens)	WHAT'S RIGHT: REASON TO BE GOOD:	should be a nice person and live up to the expectations of people I know and care about. So others will think well of me (social approval) and I can think well of myself (self-esteem)
STAGE 4: RESPONSIBILITY TO "THE SYSTEM" (high-school years or late teens)	WHAT'S RIGHT: REASON TO BE GOOD:	I should fulfill my responsibilities to the social or value system I feel part of. To keep the system from falling apart and to maintain self-respect as somebody who meets my obligations.
STAGE 5: PRINCIPLED CONSCIENCE (young adulthood)	WHAT'S RIGHT: REASON TO BE GOOD:	should show the greatest possible respect for the rights and dignity of every individual person and should support a system that protects human rights. The obligation of conscience to act in accordance with the principle of respect for all human beings.

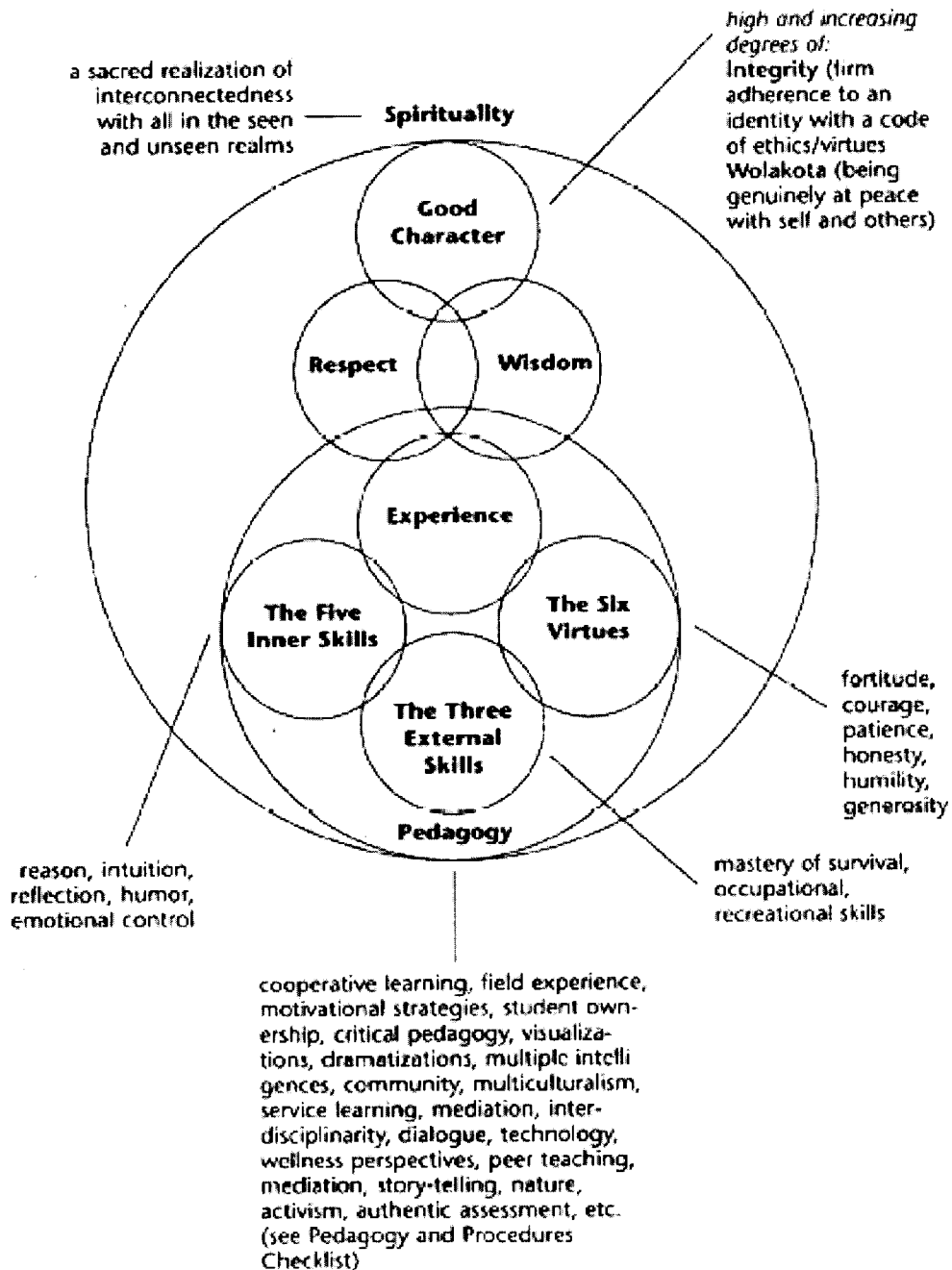
*Taken from: *Raising Good Children*, by Dr. Thomas Lickona, pp. 11-15, A Bantam Book, Sept. 1983, Feb. 1985, Oct. 1994, New York

*Stages 1 through 5 are adapted from Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning as described in Kohlberg (1975, 1978, 1981); Stage 0 is adapted from William Damon (1977) and Robert Selman (1980).

Figure 1

A Conceptual Model of Character Education

A Conceptual Model for Character Education



*From: *Teaching Virtues: Building Character across the Curriculum*, p. 33, by Don Jacobs and Jessica Jacobs-Spencer. A Scarecrow Education Book, Blue Ridge Summit, PA, 2001

*NOTE: The authors view spirituality from a Native American tribal perspective. This approach must be necessarily understood from a biblical perspective if used to inform the development of a Christian character curriculum.

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If you have had any special honors or awards, please note them here. If not, go on to the next item.

If you have published, please note the articles or books.