

# **Some Things Christian Parents Should Know (About US Higher Education) Before Sending Their Kids to College**

**A Presentation for Parents of Late High  
School Students**

**Steve Vardeman**

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# Who Am I and Why Am I Here?

I am

- a servant of the King, saved by His grace
- a husband (39 years) and father (2 sons) and grandfather (3 grandkids)
- an Open Bible church member (since 1986) and church board member (since 1987)
- an academic (PhD in Statistics 1975, university faculty member in Statistics and Industrial Engineering since)

# Who Am I and Why Am I Here?

I am here because

- I know from long experience what awaits your children
- I know on the sure authority of Scripture what really matters in life
- for the sake of the Lamb and your children's souls, I hope to help you understand what you face

# Topics for Tonight

- What should be the goal(s)? What is the danger?
- Realities about modern institutions of higher education
- Types of institutions (and some of their characteristics)
- Realities about your kids and their peers
- Realities about faculty and administrators
- Realities about majors and plans of study
- Timing and sequence
- Realities about campus ministries
- The crucial role of a real grown-up church
- What you can do (now and as you live through this)
- What you must encourage/?require? your kids to do

# The Central Christian Goal of a Post- Secondary Education

## **To, in a real and living way, know Christ**

**Php 3:7-9** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

# *Subject to the Primary Goal*

## **To become an educated person**

To be intellectually equipped for a life of fearless and fruitful service to the King; aware through Biblical eyes of the state of the world, prepared to live in it as a pilgrim and sojourner to the glory of God and the good of humanity; ready to learn and as an individual properly evaluate *whatever comes* in the light of Scripture

# *Subject to the Primary Goal*

## **To acquire skills and basic knowledge**

To have ones mind sharpened, informed, and trained in subjects and disciplines that are consistent with Biblical Truth and of practical use in life and service to the King; to have bases for effective support of and service in a family, church, and society

# The Fundamental Danger

Most kids raised in Christian homes (often implicitly choosing some wrong primary goal, ill-prepared, and frighteningly naïve) fail to make it through a post-secondary education at a vulnerable time of life with any pretense of faith intact

- A very few eventually “come home”
- Most do not

## *Secondary Dangers*

Many children squander their family's resources without obtaining anything of lasting value ... they waste precious opportunities by choosing badly

Christian parents often end up financially supporting parts of institutions and programs that are deeply anti-Christian

# A Disavowal of Indiscriminant Anti-intellectualism

The basic problem here is NOT that the intellect is inherently evil, but rather that it can be improperly directed and fail to honor God

**Luk 10:27** And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength *and with all your mind*, and your neighbor as yourself."

Many kids from Christian homes are "bluffed out of" Christianity when they wrongly lose confidence that the Christian Faith is intellectually sound

# What is Our Frame of Reference?

**Psa 1:1** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

**Psa 1:2** but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

**Pro 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Pro 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

# A Slight Qualification

I am about to speak in generalities ... while you (and I) may know of some exceptions to these generalities, in my experience of 42 years in the university world, they are overwhelming true to the way things are

# Realities About Modern Higher Educational Institutions

- They are nearly all part of what Jesus and the New Testament writers called ***the world*** ... the system of fallen humanity that operates without real regard for (and ultimately in opposition to) the Kingdom of God and all that is genuinely good
- Most are in the grip of (and ruthlessly enforce) an aggressively irreligious politically-correct-orthodoxy (as the only allowed frame of reference)

# Realities About Modern Higher Educational Institutions

- Most of their administrators care neither for your children's souls nor for their genuine education
- Contrary to high-sounding public rhetoric, they will treat your children primarily as cash cows
- They are increasingly “post-modern” in practice, dealing in “form over substance” and many are aggressively anti-Christian in ideology
- They can leave your children with a crushing life-long debt if they are not careful
- You largely have no choice but to use them, but should do so wisely

# Types of Institutions

- (openly) For-profit schools
- Technical/trade schools
- Community/junior colleges
- 4-year colleges (both completely secular and with some church heritage)
- Bible colleges
- Universities (both state and private)

# General Characteristics of Institutions

- (openly) *For-profit* schools (including on-line outlets)
  - Typically have the least competent faculty
  - Rarely deliver on their promises of good-paying jobs at the end, and often leave students with big debts and little practical way to pay them off
  - Provide little to nothing in the way of classical education
  - Grant degrees that are often externally not recognized as having value and credits that typically won't "transfer"
  - Are not ideologically driven

Relatively speaking: these are typically not terribly dangerous, but also not a good dollar value

# General Characteristics of Institutions

- Technical/trade schools
  - Do not intend to provide general classical education and are typically not ideologically driven
  - Provide certification with only very specific spheres of recognition
  - If publicly supported can be a good dollar value for some kids for some purposes (private ones are often a poor dollar value)

# General Characteristics of Institutions

- Community/junior colleges
  - Are usually publicly supported and the least expensive route to starting a general education (credits will usually “transfer”)
  - Are, in some sense, the “new high schools” (and in fact, in Iowa are on the same state budget as public schools)
  - Offer “soup-to-nuts” from solid basic material to completely frivolous nonsense (anything that “sells”)
  - Instructor competence and strength of students vary wildly
  - Have their share of ideologically-driven faculty members
  - Being commuter institutions, provide a less comprehensive all-encompassing peer influence and environment than residential schools

# General Characteristics of Institutions

- 4-year colleges (private, often with a church heritage and sometimes a current affiliation)
  - Are typically a fairly expensive option for a classical general education (but credits are completely “transferable”)
  - Faculty is usually a mix of MS and PhD’s, most genuinely dedicated to teaching
  - The “average” passive student may get the best general education at one of these
  - Being residential, these typically have a “hot-house,” homogenous, and usually quite worldly peer environment
  - Are typically ideological strongly secular/liberal ... even ones maintaining some relationship to a denomination have strong faculty elements “pushing the envelop”

# General Characteristics of Institutions

- Bible colleges
  - Are usually a work of love on the part of a faculty and denomination, almost always struggling financially
  - *Can* fail to be more than glorified church camp or remedial Sunday School, not really providing serious academic rigor or challenge
  - Often do not provide broad general education
  - On the other hand, some have strayed from Bible to *dubious* “related/helping” programs and emphases
  - Credits typically won’t “transfer” to more “standard” institutions

# General Characteristics of Institutions

- Universities
  - Grant at least some graduate degrees and have the highest educational qualifications for their faculty members
  - Make their reputations mostly in *graduate* programs and research, not basic undergraduate education
  - Have the widest variety of programs, but a large fraction are genuinely and inherently hostile to Biblical Christianity
  - *Can* provide a good basic education (and dollar value) for a careful and non-passive Christian kid who seeks out opportunities and flees danger
  - Will provide no more than you and your children require them to provide in exchange for your financial support
  - Will provide exposure (good or bad) to all sorts of people and cultures

# Realities About Kids and Peers

- Without proper guidance, many of your kids will want an easy route of little lasting value, rather than a hard/rigorous one that could prepare them for effective life service to the King
- Peers *will be* a powerful influence for the world, and alcohol, drugs and sex are the least of it ... anti-Biblical premises are far more deadly
- Biblical illiteracy, lack of intellectual rigor in public school academics, and a post-modern “consumerism” assumption that “I am captain of my own ship and may pick and choose what I’ll believe and do” leave kids with no real defense against worldly peers and faculty

# Realities About Administrators

- Administrators increasingly see themselves as business managers and politicians and most have ceased to be either scholars or teachers
  - Their first concern is dollars and an ever-bigger institution
  - Their vision is very narrow and not at all fixed on “the good” unless it is aligned with their business goals (e.g. much about grade inflation, lack of rigor, and dumbing-down of education comes from pressures they create on faculty)
  - Particularly at colleges and universities, what they support and promote internally is highly ideological and politically correct

# Realities About Faculty

- There are all kinds and the mix varies (more or less predictably) according to institution type ... they WILL have an effect on your children
  - Some will be indifferent to your children
  - Some ideologues will have the personal mission of destroying an orthodox Christian faith
  - Some will be fearlessly Christian and of good influence on your kids
  - Some (particularly young faculty) will be Christian but intimidated by the world system and trying to “keep their heads down”
  - Some (particularly older faculty) will be Christian but anxious to remain in good standing with peers and thus constantly be seeking to “find middle ground” with the world

# Realities About Majors and Plans of Study

- Your child will to some extent (greater or lesser) absorb the predominant world view of those who teach him or her, and the assumptions underlying the current form of the discipline – almost guaranteed!!!
- Some disciplines are more fundamentally antagonistic to Christianity than others
- Some majors/plans of study are more demanding and correspondingly more worthwhile than others
- The easy path is never good stewardship, and it is often the spiritually most dangerous

# Timing and Sequence

- The “standard” timing of a post-secondary education should not be assumed to be essential ... there are strong general advantages to doing it “early,” but not all kids are ready (intellectually or spiritually)
- Many would benefit from some time in the military or at a job before starting post-secondary education (to get maturity and appreciation of the cost)
- While all institutions will want you to “buy the whole package” from them, a plan knowledgeably fashioned a’ la carte might be best for your child (e.g. 1 year general education at a local community college, 1 year Bible college, 3 years university)

# Realities About Campus Ministries

- They almost universally employ fundamentally worldly methods (the most common symbol is the electric guitar, not the cross)
- Those who “minister” are often not mature in the Faith and in reality have only very short term perspectives
- Their programs and messages are highly self/youth-oriented (and when “service” opportunities are offered, they are “hit and run” things)
- Provide very homogeneous and ingrown “youth culture” environments
- Rarely provide serious Bible teaching (instead, “rap sessions” and popular music are the standard fare)

# The Crucial Role of a Real Church

- Your children need a real church while in school
  - They need real, mature pastors
  - They need real Bible preaching and teaching
- Real churches provide
  - Mature role models and people who will care about the souls of your children
  - A Long term perspective
  - Opportunities for real, meaningful service

# What You Can Do

- Read and get an understanding of what your children will face
- Talk with your kids and plan ... determine ahead of time what programs you will and will not support (*Don't fund your kids' destruction!!*)
- Require serious academic effort in high school
- Value the Bible and the church (for what it is, not for fancy programs)
- Require church attendance for financial support
- Pray earnestly ... there is real danger here

# What You Should Encourage Your Kids to Do

- Read and begin to be aware of world-view issues
- Work, both in high school, and for pay to save for the cost of post-secondary education
- Take the hard route, for the glory of God
- Study and memorize the Bible
- Be active in a real church

# Take Home Messages

- Start NOW to plan for what is coming and talk with your kids about it
- Love Christ, the Bible, and Christ's church .... and teach your children to do so as well
- Don't assume that you have no responsibility for what happens to your kids after high school, or that it is automatic that they will continue in the Way
- Trust God and pray earnestly

**A Short Break**

**Then**

**Free Form Discussion**