There is no shortage of leadership books, but there is a shortage of excellent writing focused on leading the Christian school. Dr. Timothy Wiens, head of school at Delaware County Christian School, also serves as the executive director of the Council on Educational Standards and Accountability (CESA). Dr. Kathryn Wiens is the director of academic achievement for CESA, and she was a primary author of the recent Cardus Education Survey. This husband and wife team has made an outstanding addition to Christian school leadership resources with this collection of essays from 14 contributors.

Included are essays on philosophy, mission, governance, and educational theory. Bruce Lockerbie leads off by using his command of history, philosophy, and Scripture to build a strong case that Christian school education is essential and beneficial. He argues for a flexible admissions policy in our Christian schools, allowing room for some students who would otherwise never enter into the environment in which Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord and Savior. Charles Glenn makes a compelling argument that the loss of Christian school distinctiveness could be the greatest threat to the movement; thus schools should have ongoing discussion about climate, culture, ethos, and character. He emphasizes that hiring decisions are the most significant in maintaining a distinctively Christian mission.

Mission clarity is championed in the chapter by Barry Giller, who states, “It becomes the critical mission of the head of school to set a clear and distinctive vision, and then speak often and consistently about it” (97). Chuck Evans questions whether the recent decline in Christian school enrollment was caused by a lack of mission clarity. Did schools elevate spiritual development to the point of obscuring the academic mission?

Bill McGee outlines the essential ingredients for effective school governance—both for the board and for the head of school. “When a strategically-minded governing board partners with an effective head of school, the Christian school is poised to deliver the kind of education desired and expected by its constituency” (109). Heads must lead with vision, continually assess reality, function as the chief planner, and assemble the best team of teachers and administrators possible.

In what I found to be the most powerful chapter in the book, “A Bowed Head and a Humble Heart: The Head of School’s Pastoral Role,” John Ferguson vividly describes the challenge of being the chief shepherd in a Christian school community: “While a head of school is typically not an ordained priest or minister, he must clearly serve a pastoral role” (122). Few Christian school leaders feel qualified to function in this role. He describes the minefields in pastoral leadership—discouragement, hardening of the heart, and the criticism and misunderstanding that comes with leadership.

Tim Wiens addresses some of the faulty philosophical foundations of the much heralded twenty-first-century learning. While he supports the appropriate use of technology in the classroom, he challenges the philosophy that replaces teachers with technology and makes the student the key decision maker in the learning process. A short primer on types and purposes of assessments is provided by Jonathan Eckert, who argues that assessment is an essential component of teaching and learning. There are additional practical essays on cocurricular activities, diversity, discipleship, and service learning.

Dr. Gary Arnold concludes this collection with “A Roadmap for the Future: Christian Schools Today and Tomorrow.” Arnold weaves the themes of the prior chapters and lays out his concerns about the future of Christian schooling. The fiscal challenges are growing; they are joined by governance issues, academic accountability, infringements on religious freedom, and our tendency toward isolationism.

This book provides a series of well-written essays on leadership issues that matter. We all know that leadership in the Christian school is of utmost significance; this collection also reminds us that leadership is complicated and challenging.


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