

From Student to Teacher: A Graduate's Reflection

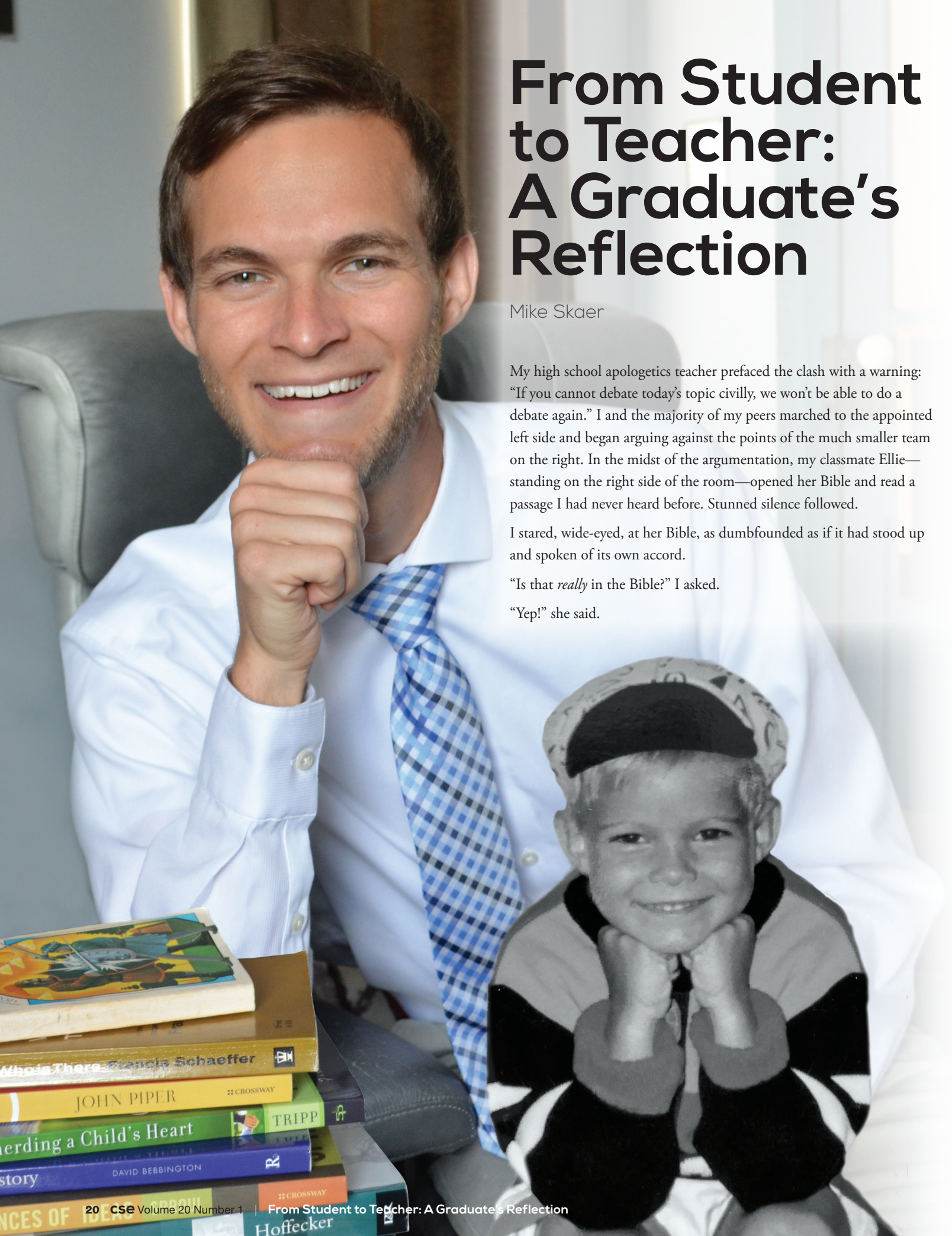
Mike Skaer

My high school apologetics teacher prefaced the clash with a warning: "If you cannot debate today's topic civilly, we won't be able to do a debate again." I and the majority of my peers marched to the appointed left side and began arguing against the points of the much smaller team on the right. In the midst of the argumentation, my classmate Ellie—standing on the right side of the room—opened her Bible and read a passage I had never heard before. Stunned silence followed.

I stared, wide-eyed, at her Bible, as dumbfounded as if it had stood up and spoken of its own accord.

"Is that *really* in the Bible?" I asked.

"Yep!" she said.



I stood up, walked across the chasm, and sat down with that small team. That day, the Lord used them to teach me a very important lesson: I didn't know the Bible...and, ultimately, I didn't really know Him. Thus began my ferocious digging into God's Word. I wanted to know him, and so I needed His Word.

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I thank the Lord for our apologetics teacher: he created space for his students to hold up their beliefs against the truth of God's Word. And God used that to change us. This all occurred a few short months before my father left my family. And knowing what I now know of my heavenly Father, I have a hunch He wanted me especially rooted in His Word, trusting in His truths and not my own mind's lies, so that I could withstand the coming attacks of the devil.

God uses various kinds of people and institutions for His glory and the good of His people. And I love Christian education in particular because God loves using Christian education for His glory and for His people's good. This story and what follows are some windows into how God has shaped me through my K–12 Christian education—to the point that I myself have become a Christian educator.

I grew up in a Christian home and went to church, but it was in school where I made my profession of faith. And it was also in school that I saw the true evil of my sin. Early in my kindergarten year, I remember getting angry at a boy and chasing him around the playground. From the other side of the jungle gym, he said, "You're not a Christian, are you?" I was cut to the quick! How bad was I that my anger made it obvious to others that I wasn't a Christian?

Later, when our teacher asked if anyone wanted to accept Jesus as their Savior, the Lord urged me to make that commitment, and I did right there. The teacher asked for a show of hands of who prayed and I peeked to see who else did it. Coincidentally, that boy I had chased told our teacher that I had been peeking. I had been found out again! But my kindergarten teacher, who was cleverer than either of us imagined, asked him, "If your eyes were closed, how could you see Michael's eyes open?" Neither of us saw that coming. At the end of the day, both of us had been found out, but I had now been found by God.

My sophomore year of high school, in the words of Charles Dickens, "was the best of times, it was the worst of times." While this marked the year my father chose to leave our home, it also marked the year the Lord used my apologetics teacher to awaken me spiritually. Although the Christian school community rallied to nurture me, my family and my church

joined together to equip and guide me. About a year earlier, my youth pastor had spoken on faith. While I don't remember what he said, I do remember thinking, "I don't have that kind of faith. But I need it." This serves to remind us that the Christian school cannot replace the church and the family, two institutions God has created for the thriving of His people. In my case, God chose to use my loving family members, my church, some stellar friends from school, and one very rowdy debate in Bible class to guide me along.

A Bible teacher introduced my class to C.S. Lewis and his book *Mere Christianity* our senior year in high school. Through that book, God began revealing to me the robust apologetics underpinning the Christian faith. Later that year, God invited me to ponder eternity in *The Great Divorce*. And a good many years later, when I myself taught Bible and history at a Christian school, the Lord encouraged my struggling faith through reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Till We Have Faces*.

God set me on this path through that faithful Bible teacher, willing to teach the depths of the Christian faith to antsy seniors. Because of devoted teachers like this, I studied to become a Christian high school teacher. Benefiting from the impact of godly men and women solidified my desire to work with young people at a formative age. As Christian educators, we have the unique opportunity to train disciples of Jesus Christ as we teach core subjects, meet with students, and stay in touch with alumni. I think the Lord is well pleased when Christian educators teach their subject well, love their students well, and seek to shepherd their students to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, souls, and minds. May God use us in that way for His fame.

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Imagine the impact of 13 years of Christian education. Imagine 13 years of memorizing Scripture, daily Bible classes, teachers' prayers, and learning core subjects in the light of God's Word. Space here fails me to tell about the impact of growing up with a group of solid Christian friends, an amazing and dedicated Bible teacher, another teacher who took my calls after graduation to give words of wisdom, or our Spanish teacher's hilarious and moving commencement speech on "Expect the Unexpected" (and, yes, I do actually remember it!). The Lord uses all things for His glory and for the good of His people. Christian education is a wonderful example of how He does this.

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