



# Teaching Redemptively

**Joining Jesus' Restoration Project in Your Classroom**

**Third Edition**

**Donovan L. Graham**

# Endorsements

“In *Teaching Redemptively*, Donovan Graham has made an important contribution to the literature of Christian teaching and learning. Weaving together the theology of God’s big story of creation, the Fall, redemption, and restoration with the critically important role of grace in teaching image bearers of the Creator with practical applications regarding curriculum choice and design, evaluation, discipline, and a range of other important topics, Graham guides readers into thoughtful consideration of bringing schools into a place of *shalom*.”

—Tom Dykhouse  
Co-CEO

*Christian Schools International*

“Donovan Graham is one of the giants of Christian education. Over many years he has taught and led in a way that emboldens us to see God’s love and redemptive grace throughout the entire school curriculum, in our discipline approaches, in our policy constructions, in our welfare considerations, and in our leadership development. *Teaching Redemptively* is a wonderfully helpful companion, a handbook to help shape teachers in faith development, practice, and curriculum design. From those new to the classroom to those wizened owls who still need an encounter with God’s grace, this book is gold.”

—Michelle Dempsey  
CEO

*Christian Education National  
Australia*

“In a post-Christian culture marked by polarization, a well-documented lack of trust for one another, and the church playing a decreasing role in even professing Christians’ lives, the role of the Christian school has become increasingly complex—and necessary. This third edition has expertly taken the theological and philosophical foundations we have appreciated in the first two editions and created a text that will stimulate meaningful dialogue about what Christian schooling can and should be.”

—Kathryn L. Wiends, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

*Council on Educational Standards and  
Accountability*

“Donovan Graham reminds Christian educators that they have a part in God’s restoration process for all creation. He makes it clear that God has given each teacher and school leader a role in the true story of the world. He gently urges readers to think deeply about education practices that best reveal God’s kingdom and how His kingdom operates.

“But this text is more than just the latest trend in inspirational reads for Christian educators. It is more than just another book of theoretical concepts concerning Christian education. Educators who read this book will be led to grapple with God’s outrageous grace and how they can—in fact, must—live (and work) in response. Graham provides examples and resources to help educators on God’s restoration quest. When read with humble and God-attuned hearts and

minds, this text will enable Christian educators to make faithful changes in their personal lives and shape their professional practices.”

—Dr. Fiona Partridge  
Principal  
National Institute for Christian Education  
Australia

“As a Christian educator who read, and repeatedly re-read Graham’s earlier edition of *Teaching Redemptively*, it was with anticipation and wonder that I was privileged to review the book’s third edition. Anticipation, because knowing Donovan and his work, I could expect new seams of gold to be discovered. Wonder, because I was curious to find out how this foundational book could be strengthened. I was not disappointed!

“In this edition, Donovan continues in his invaluable way of beginning with God, and His story. He places the deep hopes for Christian education in their rightful place—within ‘a transformational narrative that should form and inform the backbone of everything we do.’

“The other obvious addition this version provides practitioners with are the rich ideas and liturgies Donovan presents, each readily accessible for exploration and engagement. With the inclusion of these, Donovan reminds and equips us with rhythmic and restorative practices that everyday educators can use to ‘incline them in a certain direction,’ equipping them well to ‘think about, and implement, an education that can best reveal the King—and how His kingdom operates.’”

—Simon Matthews  
Executive Principal  
Chairo Christian School,  
Australia

“Whether this is your first year or your thirty-first year teaching in a Christian school, *Teaching Redemptively* provides both new insights and timely reminders that roots your classroom practices and posture within the redemptive story of God and His creation. Graham’s writing embodies and strengthens the connection between the deep hope of Christian education and the countless micro practices that create a day of learning for teachers and students within Christian schools. *Teaching Redemptively* is a book of hope.”

—Darryl DeBoer  
Director  
*Teaching for Transformation*

“Graham’s *Teaching Redemptively* invites readers into the roles of characters and carriers of God’s grand narrative. This text is a beautiful blend of perspective and practice for those responding to the call to teach Christianly, to become ‘redemptive teachers [who] are engaging their students in healing, restoring, renewing, reconciling, merciful, just, creative, and beautiful activities—practices that are redemptive in themselves.’”

—Dr. Timothy Van Soelen  
Professor of Education  
Executive Director  
Center for the Advancement of Christian Education

“My pride almost prevented me from making this statement—Donovan Graham got me again! Indeed, this version of *Teaching Redemptively* challenged me on an even deeper level of understanding the difference between outward conformity and inward change. And the difference between compliance and commitment. Graham walks us through the compounding impact of a school’s practices on its ethos, when centered on grace-filled classrooms, curriculum, discipline, assessment, and every other school component. Graham reminds us that the formation of habits through consistent practices will ultimately guide our students to desiring God’s kingdom and loving the one true King—Jesus Christ. Is there anything more important when considering our school’s portrait of a graduate? Is Graham correct in linking the school’s day to day processes with igniting curiosity from students, parents and even the school’s community? The type of curiosity that intrinsically challenges the outward-based performance metric and replacing it with an inward-based transformation of one’s mind and heart? Yes, I think Graham is correct, and I believe this book is just as important for a veteran educator as it is for a novice—I highly recommend it.”

—Larry Taylor, Ph.D.  
President  
ACSI

If the words redemption, restoration, grace, image-bearer, deep hope and reimagining stir your spirit as an educator, then *Teaching Redemptively* is for you. If these very words are strange and foreign to you as an educator, then *Teaching Redemptively* is for you as well. The premise that our school outcomes can transcend raw achievement and touch the very soul of students, teachers and homes is a promise of this book and of God.”

—Gary B. Arnold, Ed. D.  
President / Head of School  
Little Rock Christian Academy

In *Teaching Redemptively* Donovan Graham has given us a thoughtful book and challenged us to ensure our embodiment of Christian Education forms students into members of the Story of God and His people. I recommend it for those both new and old to Christian Education. For those new to more deeply understand why Christian education is nothing short of essential ‘for such a time as this.’ For those ‘old’ to be re-inspired to their calling to play their part in shaping a redeemed people who bring God’s redemption to all of life.

—Dr Dave Loewen  
Executive Director  
The Society of Christian Schools  
in British Columbia



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To my wife, Wilma,  
my children, Patrick, Michelle, Jillaine, and Seth, and to my many students  
over the years—all of whom have allowed me to try to live out what I believe.  
And to those school leaders who have allowed me to teach from who I am,  
God has blessed me richly through you.

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# Acknowledgments

As I noted in the earlier editions of this book, and knowing that it sounds much too pious, the Holy Spirit deserves much credit for this book. As one who still does not consider himself a real author, I could not have done this without His prompting, challenging, enabling me to persevere, and sitting with me at the keyboard. I have relied on His companionship greatly in this effort.

I also had never intended to do a third edition until I was prodded by two dear friends and colleagues from Australia—Fiona Partridge and Simon Matthews—both wonderful educators who understand what I think probably better than I do and who seek to live it out in all their educational endeavors.

Another educator who contributed greatly to this edition is Darryl DeBoer of the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education at Dordt University. His work and insights as the director of Teaching for Transformation (TfT) led me to include a significant chapter on the whole practice of TfT written by him. You will find it in Chapter 20.

Then I must give great thanks and much admiration to the teachers and school leaders to whom Darryl referred me. They gave me their time, experience, and wisdom as they described the practice of TfT. Without their input there would not be nearly enough practical illustrations of what I have been writing about. And as I talked with each of them, they greatly encouraged me to recognize what some teachers out there are doing to teach redemptively. Their examples made me rejoice. You can access some of their work through the QR code found in Chapter 20.

## Teaching Redemptively

Yet another key educator who contributed significantly to this edition, both as a great encouragement to me and as the author of the foreword and the postscript, is Jay Ferguson, head of school at Grace Community School in Tyler, Texas. In addition to his direct contribution to the book, his ideas and suggestions helped me greatly, and his enthusiasm for what I was doing surely kept me going.

Looking back over my more than fifty years as an educator, I once again realize how much I owe to the students who found themselves in my classes and who bravely went on to try to implement some of what they had come to believe. I also am most grateful for the school leaders who allowed me to teach from what I believed, most specifically Jeff Hall and the late Nick Barker, my former academic vice presidents at Covenant College. I am deeply indebted to both. My colleagues in the department of education at Covenant College were also a great support for me in my many years of attempting to become a redemptive educator: Rebecca Dodson, Tim Evealitt, Steve Kaufmann, and the late Bob Ashlock. What a team to have beside you.

I am always extremely grateful for my wife, Wilma, who continually supports and encourages my efforts in doing something like writing a book. I do not believe I really deserve her confidence in me, but it surely helps me all through the ups and downs.

And finally I want to thank the editorial and publishing staff at ACSI. That you should be interested in my going at this one more time is quite amazing. I am most grateful for your support and assistance—a necessary gift that every author must receive.

# Preface

In the previous editions of *Teaching Redemptively*, and in my book *Making a Difference*, I tried to set forth what I believe are biblically supported concepts concerning how grace and truth are to be brought into the classroom. Since one of my deep convictions is that the processes we use in the classroom become a more lasting and powerful influence on shaping the kind of people our students become, I tried to give a framework and some suggestions as to how grace and truth should affect five aspects of teaching: the purpose we have for education, the way we view the learner, how we understand the learning process, who the teacher is, and how we should look at the subject matter. In the second edition of *Teaching Redemptively*, I also added some thoughts about the spiritual health and well-being of the teacher who tries to teach redemptively.

In Part One of this new edition, I provide some perspectives on what I believe God is doing in the redemptive and restorative work that was inaugurated by Jesus. I want to emphasize that what we as Christian educators are to do is to *reveal who Jesus is and bring His kingdom to life in the classroom*. God has given us His story in the Scriptures, and we need to recognize that we are participating in the continuing unfolding of that story as we teach in our classrooms. *We are joining Jesus in His restoration project*, and thus the way we do our work (the processes we use) matters a great deal.

I believe we participate in the writing of this story through the way we do things in the classroom—the choices we make regarding the curriculum, the learning experiences we design and into which we invite our students, the ways in which we evaluate their learning, and the ways we interact with them in all the various contexts

in school and out. What we do grows into practices that form and transform our students. They may not remember much of what we say to them, but they will long be affected by the practices they experience in our classrooms. Unfortunately, not all practices in Christian school classrooms will necessarily lead students to become fully alive residents of God's kingdom here on earth.

Part Two is a reminder of several things we must believe and be committed to if we are to write our part of the story in concert with His story. We must remember what redemption is and how it occurs through grace. We add to that our sense of purpose that is peculiar to the world of education. And then there are our beliefs about students as image bearers of God, about the learning process, and about subject matter—these are included here too.

Part Three offers suggestions for pursuing practices that reveal the kingdom. Discussion of how and why things are done in our hypothetical Omega Christian School is included first, followed by references to real teaching units that I believe reveal the kingdom. They will show how some teachers at different grade levels in various subject areas are applying the principles of the book.

Part Four is an expanded discussion regarding the spiritual health and well-being of the teacher. It is an attempt to nurture the intimate relationship an educator must have with God to sustain the work of teaching redemptively. Christian teaching at any level is hard work, and the demands placed upon the educator by external sources are many. And that does not even consider the internal demands a Christian educator may self-impose. Redemptive teaching cannot be approached merely as a new set of techniques with which to pursue our craft. The work, if pursued on our own, will leave us weary or eventually cynical and mechanical. What we do must flow from who we are, and who we are must be grounded firmly in our identity in Christ, our security in the love of the Father, and our fellowship with the Holy Spirit. I hope to give some practical ways to establish and maintain that relationship as the key to anything you may do in the classroom as a redemptive teacher.

In this version of *Teaching Redemptively*, I intend to make these significant additions to the previous work:

- the matter of bringing the kingdom to life in the classroom;
- the way teachers and students play a part in continuing to write the story;
- providing more concrete illustrations of what happens in a kingdom classroom and why; and
- speaking more thoroughly and directly to the matter of how teachers can

## Preface

develop and maintain a relationship with God that sustains them over the long haul and encourages them to live as kingdom citizens.

I believe it is important to say a word to the Christian educators who work in secular school settings. While this edition of *Teaching Redemptively* is clearly written for a Christian school context, it is important to realize that the principles apply anywhere. Restrictions on what you may say in a secular school have little relevance to what you do in the way you shape your learning activities, evaluate learning, interact with students, physically arrange your room, apportion your time, etc. And all these things are ways of making the Kingdom operative in your classroom.

We also need to recognize that even non-Christian educators can generate educational practices that reflect kingdom principles. All that is good and true and right comes from God, regardless of who discovers or promotes it or claims credit for it. Just as the rain falls on the just and the unjust, brilliant ideas and practices can fall on those whose purpose is not specifically to follow Jesus. You will find some such practices in the references to Christian Deeper Learning in Appendix A.

There are many new issues that confront Christian educators now twenty years after the first edition of the book. I cannot pretend to address all those issues, and that is not the purpose of this book. What I hope it might do, however, is provide a framework and set of abiding and guiding concepts and questions that will assist Christian teachers and school leaders in addressing those issues in a Christlike, kingdom way. If we can handle particular, hard issues as those who are in daily and consistent practice of revealing who Jesus is and how His kingdom operates, then our struggles, successes, and failures may all be limited and imperfect, but honorable attempts to keep writing His story with Him.

—Donovan L. Graham, Ed.D.

# Foreword

There has perhaps never been a more important season in our culture for teaching or leading in a Christian way.

Our Western tradition has shifted away from what Charlie Phillips, executive director of the Christian Education Charitable Trust (Maclellan Family Foundations), has called “the Constantinian Parenthesis,” that era known as Christendom that stretched from the adoption of the Edict of Milan in AD 313 to the past few decades. That season, lasting nearly two thousand years, was a time when Christianity as a faith construct molded and shaped the world around it, forming the way people thought about their identities, what constitutes the good life, and meaning itself.

While this shift seems to have manifested fully within the past decade or two, it is a move that has been coming since the Enlightenment. From the days of Descartes and Rousseau, the rise of the autonomous self, separated and segregated from a communal sense of thought and being, Western self-understanding has moved toward what American scholar Robert Bellah has called “expressive individualism”—the idea that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized.<sup>1</sup>

How this change occurred is beyond the scope of this work and has been heralded elsewhere, notably in Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*. However, as author Carl Trueman notes in *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution*, its effect is manifested in the modern sense of self, its fulfillment and happiness.<sup>2</sup> Rather than being understood

primarily in terms of my obligations and dependence upon others, I now see myself as born free from any such constraints, able to create my own identity. Instead of maturity being the process of learning to control my feelings, act with restraint, and sacrifice my desires to those of my community, “growing up” consists of capitalizing on opportunities to perform. And, whereas education might formerly have been seen as training me in the demands and expectations of the wider culture, forming and shaping me to serve my community, it is now the process of enabling me to express outwardly what I feel inwardly.

We feel the practical ramifications of this trend toward expressive individualism in our schools through everything from students’ struggles with sexual orientation and gender dysphoria, to ongoing questioning of identity and purpose, to struggling with notions of success and what constitutes a life well-lived. As teachers and administrators, we also wrestle with these notions in our attempts to help form and shape the students under our care into a distinctively Christian identity. Furthermore, the quest to have students prepared for success at the next level, and feelings of captivity to the college admissions algorithms of large state university systems, often leave schools and educators feeling stretched and torn between “playing the game” of modern Western education and the sense in their God-given spirits that there is something better, something more.

Added to these stressors are the challenges of educating students in the world of digital technology and social media, and their effects on rising anxiety and depression among the students we serve, coupled with the forming effect these devices may have on the hearts and minds of our students and ourselves. We know that these cultural artifacts, like all technology, are creationally good, and we sense intuitively that if students are to learn how to harness such ubiquitous technologies redemptively, it will be through our mentoring and guidance. Yet, understanding what and how channeling these things in an educationally sound manner looks like, and providing digital discipleship for students, is a highly complex undertaking.

Further, we are educating students in a tremendously divisive environment—a tribalistic one. Satan, the false king of the world, always devises counterfeits for what God has created and calls good—substituting lust for love, abusive power for protective power, and tribalism for community. Tribalism is counterfeit community. It has some of the characteristics of community, in that it is about people getting together, fulfilling a very human need. Yet, as author Alan Weiss notes, tribes are homogenous and exclusionary.<sup>3</sup> They see their own members’ similarities and glorify those. Tribes see others as enemies at worst and as inferior at best. One tribe is



condescending and derogatory, and in some cases violent, toward the other. Tribes are typically insecure, mistrustful of outsiders, and highly threatened by what they perceive as attacks on their beliefs and behaviors.

We see the effects of tribalism played out in political, racial, and social division, as well as through polarizing responses to a global pandemic. And the church and its schools are not immune, experiencing and, in many cases, promulgating the same kind of divisive conflict played out elsewhere.

Put all this together and we see a powerful culture shaping and forming all of us. It is not the kingdom of God at work, but rather a kingdom that has put Him on the sidelines at best and thrown Him out of the game at worst.

It's an understatement to say that in the midst of these challenges, creating an authentic Christian learning community, whether within a school itself or an individual classroom, is a momentous undertaking. And yet, as philosopher Jamie Smith has noted, our God-given calling is to cultivate and disciple "a peculiar people," a people who think, feel, and live differently than the world around them, a people transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> These people are to be a faithful presence in the world around them, loving, serving, building families, and creating artifacts of community and culture that testify to the name of Jesus, and that draw others to reconciliation and healing through relationship with Him. In other words, they are to reveal to a watching world who Jesus is and what His kingdom is about. They are to live as citizens of His kingdom amid what David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, has called "digital Babylon."<sup>5</sup>

In order to cultivate these peculiar people—these kingdom citizens—our schools themselves must be distinctively different, not rooted in the cultural soil of the philosophies of the age, but in the bedrock of God's truth. To be a peculiar place that produces a peculiar people, we must create our own liturgies, as Smith calls them, and as the church has employed for 2,000 years. Smith describes liturgies as practices that shape and form our hearts and minds, inclining us in a certain direction: They are not simply orders for church services. For the follower of Jesus, prayer, solitude, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines are examples of such liturgies. They are the means of grace, the way we place ourselves under the shower of the Holy Spirit, who then transforms our thoughts and feelings toward Christ. And liturgies are also the daily practices, regimens, and philosophies that govern our schools: their policies, practices, curriculum, and instruction. These we must create and execute in ways that will shape our students into kingdom citizens.

## Teaching Redemptively

As Christians, we are a people of story. God created humans in His image, to glorify and enjoy Him forever, and to fill the earth and subdue it as God's grateful steward. Humans rebelled against God, and through that obedience and sin, everything and all creation became broken and distorted. God sent His holy and perfect Son, the second being of the Godhead, to become a man and live among us, so that He could be the perfect atonement for our sin through His shed blood on the cross, proving His victory through His resurrection, and sealing His people with His Holy Spirit. His people would be sealed by His blood, made right with God, and who would be Christ's hands and feet in the world as His Church to draw others to Him and serve as His redeemed stewards again. Christ will one day come again to judge the earth, to make all things new. Everything broken and distorted in creation will be restored to its fully revealed and perfect form forever.

As a people of story, God's Word serves as a transformational narrative that should form and inform the backbone of everything we do in Christian schooling, serving as the source of the right belief and practice of our work. But what does this look like practically in the context of a Christian school or a classroom? How do we form the culture and practice of our schools so that everything we do—from our curriculum to instruction to evaluation to discipline to co-curricular activities to culture to community—reflects the grand story of Scripture. How do we mold and shape our students, forming us and them into this peculiar people we are called by Christ to be? How do we teach redemptively?

*Teaching Redemptively* has been used over the years in previous iterations to help teachers and administrators answer these questions within the context of God's desire and design for their own schools. The book begins with an examination of two hypothetical schools, Alpha and Omega, governed by two very different operating philosophies played out in different approaches to schooling. Subsequent chapters examine how the larger story of Scripture informs the way we view ourselves as teachers and educators, how we view our students, and the implications on the educational process itself. We learn that our teacher training programs in state and even religious colleges and universities, as well as prior teaching experiences, may have created philosophies and patterns of thought about our profession that may need to be reoriented as we consider what it means to teach redemptively.

Next we will consider the broader implications of our classrooms and schools. How does God's great story challenge—or perhaps disrupt—what we have previously thought about designing curriculum and instruction, disciplining and discipling our students, and how we build a community that truly glorifies God and reflects His

kingdom within our schools? Several models of practice are presented as examples of these principles at work. The purpose of these discussions is not to prescribe answers, but to lead to prayerful consideration of what making our schools into those that are both informed by the culture around us, and yet more largely transformed by the gospel of Christ, might entail.

The purpose of this new edition is to explore some of these questions within the context of the increasingly complex milieu of Christian education within our cultural moment. It's a season when our faith faces great challenges from the larger culture, and yet, paradoxically, where families are increasingly drawn to the distinctively different educational experiences our schools provide. Christian schooling offers promise and hope, but its power lies in the wellspring of God's redemption story in the world, and our philosophy and practice must be rooted there as well.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges we face in educating the next generation of Christ's Church in such precipitous times—or perhaps in the most trying times ever. We are encouraged by Trueman's exhortation to Christians in all eras and cultures:

It is truly very hard for any competent historian to be nostalgic. What past times were better than the present? An era before antibiotics when childbirth or even minor cuts might lead to septicemia and death? The great days of the nineteenth century when the Church was culturally powerful and marriage was between one man and one woman for life, but little children worked in factories and swept chimneys? Perhaps the Great Depression? The Second World War? The Vietnam Era? Every age has had its darkness and its dangers. The task of the Christian is not to whine about the moment in which he or she lives, but to understand its problems and respond appropriately to them.<sup>6</sup>

And, as Christian educators, we must train young followers of Jesus to do the same. May our teaching be redemptive in the moment and generation we have been given, and may the Lord find us faithful as we seek to reveal Him and His kingdom in our pursuit.

—Jay Ferguson, Ph.D.  
Head of School  
Grace Community School  
Chair of the Board  
Association of Christian Schools International

# 1 A Tale of Two Schools

While nearly all Christian schools will have statements of vision, mission, or philosophy that speak of similar goals and hopes for their schools—biblical values, Christian perspectives, holistic Christian education, behavioral standards, academic rigor, and always “excellence”—not all schools are the same. Nor do they produce the same kinds of people.

This is likely because while they may all say similar things and seek to teach subjects from a Christian perspective as they understand it, the habits they build and patterns into which they initiate their students are not the same. And they are not the same because the things students experience in the learning process are very different and work to shape and form very different kinds of human beings.

In short, though many schools seek to live under the banner “Christian,” they may create very different types of people depending on what they actually *do* in their schools. The processes used in creating and evaluating learning experiences have a much greater and longer-lasting impact on students than what the students hear. When unexamined, these practices may help form and shape students who do not live a Christian life well. They may be counter-gospel.

Let’s look at two hypothetical schools, both of which state they are Christian but probably have markedly different impact on their students, precisely because of the way they do things.

## **Life at Alpha Christian School**

The parents, teachers, and administrators at Alpha Christian School (ACS) are all competent, committed Christians who know the value of a good education. They believe that God's standards are high, and they are determined to provide an excellent education for their children. Much evidence supports their claim that ACS provides a superior education.

The standardized test scores of ACS students are consistently above those of other schools in the area, and the students are performing above grade level. The school's leaders are proud of the fact that ninety percent of their kindergarten students read before the school year is over. They have had several National Merit Scholarship finalists in the past decade, and the students from ACS have won many awards in academic, athletic, and fine arts competitions.

Over eighty percent of students have gone on to college, and several have been accepted at Ivy League and other high-caliber schools. Such success is attributed to the fact that teachers are demanding, students are committed to their work and willing to do several hours of homework each night, and the parents and others in the community offer consistent prayer support.

Behavioral standards are high at ACS, since Christians are expected to live exemplary lives before a watching world. Disruptive behavior is not allowed, students follow a carefully prescribed dress code, and all students know what is expected of them. Those students who cannot conform to the regulations or live up to the expectations of the school are asked to leave. A Christian environment is very important to both teachers and students, and the lack of discipline that is evident in many modern schools is not found at ACS.

A day in the life of ACS begins with chapel, prayer time, and the pledge to the flag (maybe the Christian flag, maybe the American flag, maybe both). A committee of parents and teachers who know important people in the community regularly provide the students with the finest chapel speakers. Bible is also a required part of the curriculum, and ACS students have won the regional Bible Knowledge Bowl for the past five years.

The curriculum is solidly Christian; the school board has determined that all classrooms will use Christian textbooks. Because secular texts are riddled with false worldviews and philosophies, the board believes that utilizing them would serve only to undermine the Christian values that ACS promotes. The existence of Christian textbook publishers has significantly simplified this task. Teachers now

have textbooks that they can trust to give accurate information and promote true Christian thinking.

Therefore, teachers are expected to use the materials, tests, and lesson plans provided by the publishers. According to school test results, these materials have a proven track record, and every time a teacher has used other materials, the learning has deteriorated. ACS leaders and teachers know that “progressive” educational methods only reflect the unbiblical thinking of the professional experts and therefore cannot be expected to produce good results. Traditional methods have proved themselves in the past, and the Christian teachers at ACS know they will get better results using the tried and true methods.

Students at ACS do not study frivolous subjects like those so often taught in public schools today. Test scores have dropped in many schools precisely because the schools have moved so far from the basics of education. ACS has recognized this mistake and has selected materials with content that needs to be mastered at all grade levels. The lessons are carefully planned by experts in each subject area, and when the material is presented the way it is supposed to be, students have no trouble absorbing what they are supposed to learn.

The students at ACS can expect several hours of homework each night. While it is true that the local public school has much less work, and some students have left ACS for this reason, the faculty and administration believe that academic rigor is an important distinction of the school, and that managing a heavy workload, together with a well-rounded selection of co-curricular activities, helps prepare students for the challenges of college.

Finally, there is no question that Christian values are emphasized at ACS. Students are taught to work hard, to be responsible, and to be thankful to God. The blessings that result from obedience are clearly contrasted with the judgment and correction that stem from disobedience. God’s standards for holiness are taught and not compromised. Virtues such as patriotism and civic duty are also nurtured, and the Christian heritage of our nation is thoroughly taught.

As one observes the school, one cannot help but notice that most everyone thinks and acts in accord with the values that pervade the school. Perhaps that is because everyone comes predominantly from the same socioeconomic, cultural, educational, and conservative Christian background. There are not many people who would be considered out on the fringes here. This keeps trouble, dissension, and division at a minimum and allows the education of the students to proceed without disruption.

## A Second Look at ACS

One might find it difficult to argue with the apparent ACS philosophy and track record. A school is judged to be successful if its graduates are successful, however. If one took the time to connect with ACS alumni and those who work and live with them, they would find those interviews to be enlightening—beginning with finding that not all alumni were happy with their educational experiences at ACS. An interviewer conducting focus groups with alumni might find comments like the following:

I thought my education at ACS was great while I was there, but now, several years later, I am wondering. The school had a great statement of purpose that talked about teaching us to live the Christian life, but we never talked about life. We only packed away what we were told in order to get good grades. Our success was measured by our GPA, and that was our ticket to the right college. It also got us a lot of praise and attention from the teachers and our parents. But very little of what we ever read or discussed had anything to do with life as I experienced it then or especially as I experience it now. We did what we were told, and if we did it correctly we were rewarded for it. That is what kept us going.

Somehow not everything seems to work that way now. My employer expects me to come up with ideas to solve the problems we face at work, and without a book to refer to, I have trouble. Even when I do have a book to follow, the solutions are seldom that simple, and I am often still stuck. And rewards are not handed out here just for doing what I am told. I am expected to be productive on my own, and if I can't be productive in that way, I'm not sure I will be able to keep going with this company. I wish someone at ACS would have not only allowed me to think but even forced me to think.

Another graduate might be found to share a story like this.

Life at ACS was a big game. Students had basically two goals. The first, and most important, was to be accepted by your peers. That could be accomplished by the way you looked and how successful you were at grades, athletics, or other performances—even “spiritual performances.” Those who made it were the ones who beat the competition. Those who didn't make it simply had to try harder next time.

The second goal was to do well enough to get where you wanted to go after graduation. That meant either doing well academically or doing well enough in extracurriculars to get good recommendations from those who could get

## A Tale of Two Schools

you into the right college or the right job. The system was certainly there. All you had to do was work hard and not cause any trouble.

What you did outside the school was pretty irrelevant to school. Even though we heard about Christian service in our chapels and read about it in the school purpose statement, nobody really had time for that. Nor did we really see the relevance of it. The whole system was set up to “look out for number one,” and that is what we did. I realize now that I need to be involved in Christian service, but I still don’t seem to have the time. My work keeps me too busy.

Yet another idea would keep cropping up in interviews with alumni. It would go something like this.

I guess I appreciated the emphasis at ACS on thinking Christian thoughts, but I am beginning to wonder if all thoughts by Christians are really Christian thoughts . . . and also if all thoughts by non-Christians are automatically non-Christian thoughts. Let me explain what I mean.

My husband (who was my boyfriend at ACS) is a Christian, but he seems to be totally tied up in his business world. He is a salesman, and like his superiors, he sees his purpose before God as selling his product. The more he sells, the more he can give to the church, and the better he can provide for his family. He is a very good salesman, so he can sell almost anybody his product, whether or not they need it or can afford it. That does not seem to bother him at all. Also, he spends so much time and energy in selling his product that he does not have time to communicate with me or our children. Quite frankly, we feel like objects around his house that he works hard to take care of. Dealing with us on a personal level is almost nonexistent.

Yet I see my neighbor’s husband who is not a Christian dealing with his family in an entirely different way. He seems to be more concerned than my husband about how other people in the neighborhood are doing. He regularly goes to help one of the less appealing and less fortunate people down the block—even taking time off from work to do so when it is necessary. While I was told at ACS that secular humanists are basically hedonists, it does not seem to be the case with him. For a long time I did not want my children to spend too much time with his children because I know they aren’t Christians, but now I don’t know what to do.



## **Life at Omega Christian School**

The teachers and school leaders of Omega Christian School (OCS) are all committed Christians who have carefully thought about how their Christian faith relates not only to both the goals and content of education but also to the process. Their Christianity pervades all they think about and all they do, and they represent a diversity of backgrounds not so common in all Christian schools. They are God's agents, not only in lip service but in actuality.

Just where the parents are in all this we may not know. They have sent their children to OCS because they care about their education, but something about the way the school operates has had an impact on them. They do not seem overly enamored with records of achievement and excellence. They want their children to succeed in life, but they do not necessarily measure that success by the acquisition of power, prestige, or opportunity. Somehow, the ethos of Omega School has permeated their thinking and attitude toward OCS—something that is very important to the school and often very hard to come by in any institution.

The staff believe God's standards are so high that no one but Christ can meet them. In fact, they seem far more aware of their brokenness and limitations than they do of the success of their school and its students. They are sobered by the infinite, humanly unbridgeable gap between God's expectations and their own performance. They harbor no illusions that they will somehow do well enough in their work and their relationships to please God. And they pay more than lip service to that theological idea as well. They boast little or not at all about accomplishments and high performance. Rather, they humbly take one step at a time—acting on their convictions, confessing that sin invades their every motive and effort, learning from their errors, and having an unusual capacity to pick one another up after they have fallen in their attempts to live up to their calling. They live and survive by the grace of God because they are constantly aware that they fall far short of His standards.

## **Academics at OCS**

The students at OCS are ordinary people. Some are quite bright academically, and some are not so bright. Some have evident gifts, while some have gifts that are still hidden. They all misuse their gifts from time to time, whether they are intellectual, athletic, musical, artistic, or relational gifts. They are all sinners, and they do not cover that up. Sometimes they strive hard to succeed; sometimes they are frightened and frustrated. At other times, they give up. Some of them resist their teachers' efforts to help, and some are arrogant enough to think they don't need much help. In short, the

school's academic record is spotty, with some students achieving at high levels and others not. OCS is not a picture of uniform academic success.

Each classroom seems to be filled with students who have varying academic abilities and motivations. For some reason, there is no bulletin board in the hallway outside the office that lists the names of the honor roll students from the last grading period. No charts are at the front of the room indicating who has read the most books in a reading contest. In fact, there are no reading contests in this school. Rewards and approval for performance do not seem to be prominent here. Doing things that might matter in the school community as well as the outside community is what seems important to those who work and study at OCS.

In fact, applying knowledge in a way that might be important to others is so prevalent that students seldom do worksheets or workbooks. Math assignments do not require the students merely to do the odd-numbered exercises to practice each new mathematical operation. Rather than just giving their essays to the teacher to receive a grade, students may send them to the local newspaper or to Congress, or they give them to classmates for information and critique.

Grades do not play nearly the role here that they seem to in other schools. Some assignments are not graded, while others are graded only after the student and teacher are both satisfied with the level of performance that is achieved after consultation and continued work. And at appropriate times in all classes, students are even asked to evaluate their own work—sometimes even assigning themselves a grade. Helping students acquire and use serviceable insights and skills and allowing them to fail and succeed in issues that matter in life seem more important than grades.

Since test scores are not a high priority at OCS, achievement tests are used sparingly. The results help the teacher and the student determine strengths or weaknesses in the academic program or in the student's or the teacher's ability. But they do not determine the curriculum content or the satisfaction with the learning and teaching experience. The curriculum content is determined by the philosophy and goals of the school, the needs and contributions of the students and teachers themselves, the issues that God calls us to face in our society, the academic disciplines as we now understand them, and the Bible itself.

While a curriculum guide directly influences the content explored in all classrooms, the teachers are responsible for determining—in consultation with other teachers, parents, and the students themselves—the day-by-day and unit-by-unit instruction as well as the year-long plan. They use teacher manuals, textbooks, and other guides as resources to help themselves and their students in accomplishing

## Teaching Redemptively

the goals that are set before them, but in no case do such helps replace the teacher's redeemed judgment and wisdom. Other human beings serve as valuable resources as well.

Students at OCS play an extraordinary role in determining the most meaningful ways to explore God's creation. Teachers begin each unit by discussing goals and purposes, needs and experiences, available resources and time, and possible worthwhile learning activities—including the best way to measure the learning. Though both teachers and students are aware of how fallen and how limited they are, they are somehow able to trust one another to help in the journey.

Both seem to have a high regard for what it means to be in the endeavor *together* as fellow human beings to whom God has given something significant to do, even when they mess things up. Perhaps that mutual respect helps explain why failing at a learning or teaching task is not so crushing here, and why students and teachers alike seem to have learned to view failure as acceptable and formative instead of as degrading and punishable. The idea of forgiveness seems to have worked its way into the performance of academic tasks.

Students and teachers at OCS pursue learning activities in an atmosphere of legitimate, though admittedly limited, exploration. They spend little time merely packing away information, though information is hardly disdained. Indeed, they deem knowledge imperative to drawing conclusions and solving problems. But they consider gaining wisdom to be more important than merely mastering information. Teachers at OCS are concerned not only that students be able to absorb information and solve problems but also that they do so with compassion and wisdom. Love seems to be a foundation for using information at this school.

Exploration often leads students at OCS to a strange sense of wonder. At the completion of a unit of study, they sometimes have more questions than when they started. And they have somehow come to believe that this is acceptable—perhaps even good. They seek to know what they can and then revel in yet another mystery. Dullness, though inevitably present at times, does not seem to reign here as it does in many schools. Learning is not confined to textbooks and workbooks. Instead, it is designed to engage students in meaningful tasks that matter to someone besides themselves and that may even inspire awe. Many times, their learning leads them outside the four walls of the classroom to encounter people and situations that expose the realities and complexities of life.

Because the world is where God has called them to live out their faith, their experiences inside and outside the classroom are also not confined to the thought

and behavior of Christian people. Not all literature has to be written by Christian authors. A chemistry text does not need to have a Bible verse on each page to justify studying the subject. Students read books and study ideas that sometimes clearly, and sometimes subtly, contradict Christian thinking. They are required to think biblically about what any author says, whether the author is a Christian or not. While doing so sometimes causes doubts and confusion for students, neither teachers nor students are afraid of it. They accept the pain of critique and sort through their confusion so that they might be strengthened in their own faith and knowledge.

Students are not, however, confined merely to critiquing all that is wrong with the world. Rather, when they encounter people who believe a distorted version of the truth because they do not know Christ, the students still see them as God's image bearers. As the students criticize others, they recognize their own distortions that result from their own sinfulness. Thus analysis and critique are not to lead simply to condemnation and rejection. If students analyze and criticize through grace, they will respond compassionately to lost sinners, and they will thank God for granting them discernment of His truth.

### **Behavior at OCS**

The fallenness of the students is evident in both their personal and academic behavior. Students sometimes make wrong choices and break the rules. There are not many rules at OCS, and those that do exist are chosen with the righteousness of Christ and the good of the community in mind. Dealing with offenders is a messy process. The teachers and the principal insist on dealing with each offender personally, never allowing the "system" to determine the consequences for breaking the rules. They choose, though sometimes reluctantly, to get their hands and feet dirty as they go into the mud hole to retrieve a belligerent or lost student. They know they might not be understood, and they know they might do the wrong thing or wind up being mistreated by a student to whom they attempt to offer some grace. But they do it anyway because God has done it for them.

Students learn much from the natural consequences that result from good or bad behavior. Thus following through with the consequences that are deserved for behavior is very important at OCS. But those who handle discipline at this school refuse to be controlled by a system of rewards for good behavior and punishment for bad. Instead, they attempt to deal with the offenders in a manner parallel to the way God deals with His wayward children, dispensing justice and mercy as they believe the Spirit of God is leading them. Sometimes students are suspended for

unacceptable behavior, and sometimes they appear to get off scot-free. Sometimes the appropriate consequences are readily apparent, and sometimes they are not. No discipline is viewed as merely an end in itself. It always seeks to restore, since that is what redemptive disciplining should do.

Forgiveness is one of the main ways to deal with offenders at OCS, though it does not always work out in acceptable ways (remember, grace is very messy). The consequences that should naturally flow from offenses are not avoided or removed, but forgiveness is not withheld until it is earned by good behavior or until the students have paid a sufficient price. Love is not withheld until the students deserve it. Trust is not kept back until students prove they can be trusted. Love, trust, and forgiveness are given away to the students in a living demonstration of grace, outrageous as grace is.

Public offenses may at times be dealt with publicly, but the dignity and worth of each student, the offender or the offended, is of prime importance to the teachers and the principal. In fact, that dignity is so important that the offenses dealt with most consistently and strongly are those that degrade or deny the image of God in other children. The fact that the image of God is so valuable is also why discipline is indeed applied at this school. To ignore sin is to devalue the sinner *and* the one sinned against.

At OCS, teachers do not think that their God-given authority allows them to control everything and everyone. They do not see themselves as present to always keep things from going wrong. Neither do they see a classroom where there is no disruption as a sign that all is going well. Instead of controlling the students, they help the students learn to control themselves. They desire to help students learn to take responsibility for their own behavioral choices by accepting the consequences of those choices. Good choices usually result in desirable consequences, while poor choices usually lead to undesirable consequences. However, such consequences do not come about mechanically and impersonally, nor are they automatic.

These teachers realize the significant difference between *compliance* and *obedience*. Compliance is due to external pressure applied to force someone to live up to another's expectations, while "obedience is about learning to live consistent on the outside with what God is doing on the inside."<sup>7</sup> Obedience is a loving response to an undeserved act of love on God's part. Obedience that results from a motive of fear is not obedience, since it has nothing to do with love. Those who obey Jesus are those who love Him, and those who love Him are those who obey Him (John 14). The two are inseparable. Teachers at OCS are committed to fostering obedience by first offering love and forgiveness.

While there is plenty of failure in behavioral terms at OCS, those who fail are not shamed, perhaps because of several things that are definitely *absent* at OCS. There is no out-loud shaming—telling students they do not measure up, asking them if they will ever get it right, comparing them with those who behave well. Affirmation, acceptance, and love are not based on good behavior; they are based on a person's position as a child of God. There are no unspoken rules that leave people embarrassed and ashamed. Also, there are no unspoken messages about unacceptable behavior that leave students wondering if what they did was acceptable or not. And finally, there is no preoccupation with fault and blame. Guilt is not a big deal, but confession and forgiveness are.

### **Spirituality at OCS**

OCS has chapel services. Its classes and co-curricular events are usually opened with prayer, and Bible is a required part of the curriculum. But these activities are not used to prove that the school has a high level of spirituality. OCS does not even compete in the regional Bible Knowledge Bowl competition. Spirituality is not measured very well by that kind of external evidence. In fact, “measures” of spirituality do not receive a great deal of attention at OCS. Instead, we find some of the following.

Humility is fostered, encouraged, and affirmed in academic, athletic, musical, and other pursuits. Students are encouraged to stand strong in their convictions but also to realize that they could be wrong. No one is applauded for winning a debate with another over differences of doctrine or an academic conclusion. In fact, students learn to respect those whose opinions may be woefully inadequate as they watch teachers lovingly deal with those whose thinking is inaccurate. There are no “We are number one!” cheers. As already mentioned, OCS does not publish an honor roll or publicly applaud high GPAs. Honor is accorded quietly to those who serve humbly rather than to those who succeed according to the world's standards of success. Achievement is honored with the just compensation of a good grade, or whatever else is appropriate, but it is not the major focus in this school. Love, as exercised in humility, is deemed much more important.

At OCS, academic knowledge is always grounded in the knowledge of God. God's revelations in His living Word (Christ), His written Word (the Bible), and His spoken Word (the creation) are all taught in such a way that students may experience them integrally. God's revelation of Himself through all three of these sources is the foundation of study at OCS, and no one of the three stands above or below the others. This kind of study leads one to encounter God as a person. A deeper and more

complete relationship to God as a person is the key outcome desired from academic study, athletic or musical performance, and service to the community.

A spiritual person does not merely understand with the mind, feel with the heart, or act with the hands and feet. The spiritual person who is in a healthy relationship with God will do all three as a result of, and in the process of, learning. Students at OCS write essays of explanation, create psalms of praise, and help those in need—all from the well of what they know as a result of their learning.

And teachers, administrators, and students alike depend on and trust in the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the school. They are not enamored with their own gifts and do not flaunt them. They do not rest on past accomplishments and laurels. They understand the limits of their own understanding and lean on the Lord for wisdom. They offer themselves and their efforts as living sacrifices to God, and they offer the fruit of their learning as worship.

### **Unity and Diversity at OCS**

Teachers and school leaders have come to sense that there should be unity *and* diversity of students and teachers and the backgrounds and cultures which they represent. Diversity is a delightful mark of both the Creation and the Church, as the Scriptures tell us that the kingdom consists of people from all tribes and nations—a very culturally, economically, politically, behaviorally, and intellectually diverse population. The unity that holds these diverse kinds of life and the people who live them together is Jesus, and what goes on at OCS is meant to reveal that.

Thus, students of differing academic backgrounds and abilities learn to work with each other to accomplish academic goals. This may take a variety of forms, but neither teachers nor students are allowed to rest in the ease of academic homogeneity. Learning to appreciate, glean from, and draw out academic gifts of others is something that is valued highly at OCS, and it is one way unity is experienced in diversity. This creates learning environments that are sometimes messy for teachers as they have to adjust for students with differing needs, but the school recognizes this and has provided resources and teachers with special training to meet those needs.

It is not merely intellectual diversity that is evident at OCS, though. Ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity is valued also. The financial policies of the school make it possible for students of varying economic status to attend. Care is taken to look for and receive students from differing ethnic backgrounds as well. Not everyone at OCS has the same color skin or will they come from homogeneous

political or religious family backgrounds. Some may be wrestling with effects of sin imbedded in their family circumstances. In other words, the diversity may be either a result of God's delightful creative nature, or it could be from the enemy's destructive desire to kill and destroy. This reflects a fallen world, where the Kingdom is not yet fully consummated.

This description of OCS may sound unrealistic in this fallen world. But the kingdom of God, which was inaugurated by the coming of Christ and to which our activity is to point, truly is unrealistic for a fallen world. Living by the Beatitudes in a fallen world is unrealistic—indeed, the gospel itself is terribly unrealistic. We may suspect that God simply does not fit the world as we know it. Exactly! That is why living by God's intended norms, dealing with fallenness through grace instead of judgment, and reflecting the character of God are so difficult and so foreign to us. Such a life is completely otherworldly. It is life designed for the children of the King, and He became one of us so that we might have that life now and eternally.

### **What Might Alumni Say?**

For starters, though they could easily identify the frailties and failures of themselves and their educational experience, they would say that the most prominent thing they experienced was that they were *loved*. They seemed to know that their teachers and administrators were not against them but *for* them, even when they had to be disciplined for bad behavior or required to do things again that had been shown to be unsatisfactory. They not only heard about grace, they knew they had experienced it. God's favor was upon them as the favor of the authorities of the school was upon them.

They did not miss that the teachers and school personnel were always trying to turn failure into something positive—trying to redeem what went wrong. In fact, they often said that their academic, athletic, musical, dramatic, and other failures proved to be some of their most valuable learning experiences. Some teachers even had the audacity to make sure that students failed at certain tasks precisely so they could learn how to make something good come out of something bad

Though school is in some ways its own world, the many exposures they had to people, circumstances, and events in the world outside the school left their mark. They had been taught to think and act beyond themselves. The lenses through which they viewed the world were much wider than merely ones through which they saw their own needs, desires, and wounds. And since the very diverse and challenging world outside the school was in many ways present in the school, they felt they had been



living the challenge of bringing unity in Jesus to bear on the diversity of the world. They had learned to celebrate and appreciate the ways God made people differently and also love the connection they had with them in Christ. Their friend groups tended to be more diverse as well, allowing them to see life through the lens of others, which they believed made them more empathetic and compassionate. What lay ahead for them after graduation was not so fearful or strange as they had faced it all along.

There was not such a big need to avoid or cover up their weaknesses and brokenness because it was not always the case that the students who were applauded and honored were simply those who performed well and succeeded at things. Having learned from their exposure to broken people in the world, they saw that God was very present in the brokenness of people who were “down and out.” They had learned that the value from being in the top position was often shallow and misguided, sometimes downright destructive.

They were not strangers to success, however. Time spent attempting to serve others, to be agents of justice and mercy, to creatively care for the creation and make the world a better place to live did not make them incompetent because they were not always preparing to achieve the best test scores. In fact, they had learned to have an impact on the culture around them through both hard study and involvement with that world. Learning things that truly meant something to them was a great advantage, not a detriment. And, not surprisingly in God’s economy, they earned their fair share of academic and other kinds of scholarships.

These students have the same difficulties and problems to face as any other school graduates. They are not exempt from the brokenness of the world. They just face them and engage them differently. They know they are part of a bigger story, and that all they do in helping to create their own story becomes a definite part of that bigger story. They are the King’s children, and they want to love the King and desire to see His kingdom be established just as the King said He had come to do. School gave them good practice in that while they were there.

### **The Problem Is in the Process.**

Though we may not realize it immediately, the *process* through which any concept or subject (content) is taught *becomes a part of the content*. In some instances, it may become an entirely different content from the one that is taught directly. This could be what happened at ACS. For instance, what happens when a biblical idea is taught through an externally motivated reinforcement learning model? Does the student learn only the content that is from the Scriptures? This is hardly the case. Using a

reinforcement learning model over a period of time very effectively teaches a view of human beings and learning that is quite contrary to biblical principles regarding the nature of either. But because the methodology occurs without comment (it is assumed to be acceptable since it was suggested by Christians), students have no idea that they are being taught a view of humanity that is beneath the image of God or a view of learning that clearly places the motivation and responsibility for learning outside the individual. Later in life the students have no idea why they do not perform very well without the expectation of an external reward, why they seem to feel like mere objects, or why they treat others as if they were objects.

As another example of how process becomes content, let us consider the problem created when one teaches a content that, from a Christian perspective, clearly calls for an active response from the learner (e.g., a social studies class that deals with the subject of poverty or racial bigotry) but allows a written test or a paper as the only response. Through such a practice, students are encouraged to think about the problems of poverty and racism, to understand them well enough to write intelligently about them—but they are not encouraged to do anything about the situation beyond the schoolroom door. What biblical teaching about knowing and doing would lead to such a practice?

Finally, what should be done with the educational program that, in Bible class, teaches that humans are made in the image of a creative God, but that then prescribes the art curriculum as a defined number of projects for the year, with each step of the creative process outlined and taught in a single half-hour period per week? What kind of creator-redeemer image do our children see in this process?

In each of these cases, what is taught through the process often has more impact than the verbal content. The verbal content is taught openly, but the process content (which often contradicts the verbal content) is taught silently. Consequently, the student is affected dramatically by a content that no one ever hears about. Of course, the content that is taught openly is supposed to be applied in life. Yet there seems to be abundant reason to question whether this content is the one carried into life, or whether students simply learn to talk about it long enough and well enough to satisfy their teachers and then are never affected by it again. Perhaps we should ask the alumni of Alpha Christian School.

The greatest damage may be done when a negative, unbiblical “silent” content truly becomes part of the child. How terrible if the content that we do not want to teach (e.g., human beings are to be treated and taught like animals or treated like objects) is the one that is eventually translated into life. We believe that human beings

**As a teacher, you are God's agent in the classroom.** You have a divine calling to reveal who Jesus is and what His kingdom is like to the students God has entrusted to you with grace and truth. No matter where or what you are teaching, you have an incredible opportunity to participate in God's larger story and make His kingdom visible. In the third edition, Donovan reviews perspectives to guide teachers in best practices and illustrates ways to teach for kingdom transformation. Beyond techniques, he encourages you to deepen your personal intimacy with God so that you can thrive in spiritual health and well-being.

Teaching for Transformation examples are available at [acsi.org/teachingredemptively](http://acsi.org/teachingredemptively).

“Graham reminds us that the formation of habits through consistent practices will ultimately guide our students to desiring God's kingdom and loving the one true King—Jesus Christ. I believe this book is just as important for a veteran educator as it is for a novice—I highly recommend it.”

—Larry Taylor, Ph.D., ACSI President & CEO

“Donovan Graham is one of the giants of Christian education. From those new to the classroom to those wizened owls who still need an encounter with God's grace, this book is gold.”

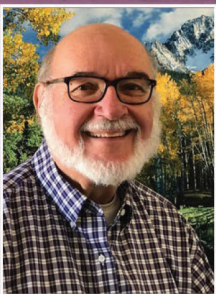
—Michelle Dempsey, CEO, Christian Education National Australia

“This third edition has expertly taken the theological and philosophical foundations we have appreciated in the first two editions and created a text that will stimulate meaningful dialogue about what Christian schooling can and should be.”

—Kathryn L. Wiends, Ed.D., Executive Director, Council on Educational Standards and Accountability

“In *Teaching Redemptively*, Donovan Graham has given us a thoughtful book and challenged us to ensure our embodiment of christian education forms students into members of the story of God and His people. I recommend it for those both new and old to christian education.”

—Dr. Dave Loewen, Executive Director, The Society of Christian Schools in BC.



Donovan Graham has been an educator and involved in training and encouraging educators since 1965. During that time, he has taught at the secondary school level; been a professor, dean, and chaplain at Covenant College for 32 years; and worked in the field of missionary caregiving. He is currently engaged as the director and spiritual guide of a ministry he calls Space for God, where he still leads workshops for educators related to his book *Teaching Redemptively*. He is deeply involved in caring for the spiritual well-being of educators, pastors, missionaries, and other Christians working in a variety of fields. His books include *Teaching Redemptively* (now in its third edition) and *Making a Difference: Christian Educators in Public Schools*. He and his wife Wilma live in Fairview, NC, which is near Asheville, and they are grateful for four children, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

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