

# CURRICULUM CHOICES THAT ENCOURAGE TRANSFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE

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*“Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.”*

*Deuteronomy 4:10*

Once upon a time a powerful leader conquered the enemies in the land that their King had promised them. When he was old, the leader called the people together and reminded them to continue serving the King. The leader reminded them how the King had been faithful to them so the leader instructed the people to honor the King and make certain their houses and children were faithful to the King. The leader warned them that failure to honor their King would result in trouble. The people cried out, “We will honor the King!” The leader wasn’t convinced and he said, “I’m not sure that you will. I think you might forsake your King and then He will bring disaster on you.” The people cried out again, “We will honor the King!”

The people settled down in their homes and became comfortable and forgot their promise to honor only their King. They failed to tell their children to honor only the good King. When the leader died, the children started loving the bad kings of the land and doing what they thought was right for themselves. The children in the land forgot how wonderful their King had been to give them good things. The King heard of their love of bad kings and became angry and let their enemies come

in and conquer them. The people suffered and cried out to their good King, and their King heard them and sent another leader to teach them and remind them of their promises. The people would remember their good King, ask for forgiveness, and for a time, love only their King again. Unfortunately, the people were not teaching their children to love only the good King so the people would follow the bad kings of the land. Once again the good King would allow enemies to come in, his people would cry out for help, and then the King would send a new leader to teach them. This continued for many generations until the people forgot their good King completely and did what was right in their own eyes. The King is Yahweh. The people are the Israelites. The leader is Moses. The cycle of teaching and learning was happening in the family.

Over and over again in the Old Testament the Israelites forgot God. They forgot what God had done, who God was, and they quit teaching their children about God. Inevitably, everything fell apart. Moses’ final words to the people were - hear, listen, and teach your children. Don’t forget. Tell your sons and daughters. Deuteronomy 4:10 says generational transference of who God is, takes place in the family.

One area where our school has tried to honor and encourage parents teaching their children is through our Bible curriculum. Perhaps this example will encourage other schools to look for new ways to promote heritage

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transference. As educators we have the role of assisting parents in making God known to the next generation. Our Bible curriculum is not a “curriculum.” We do not have teacher curriculum guides, or student crafts, or colorful illustrations. Instead, we have chosen to forgo these good curriculums in order to establish the habit of parents teaching their children, generationally. We have substituted the “curriculum” for an exercise that can be done at both school and home. Regent has adopted a three-year Bible reading plan in Classes 1-8. If a family is faithful to do the Bible reading, they will read through the Scriptures three times by the time their child enters high school. Basically, students, teachers, and parents read a chapter a day. We have a daily primary and secondary objective as well as overall objectives for each book of Scripture. The Bible reading is published weekly and families are encouraged to read the Scripture the evening before we read it in class. Our Bible time is given priority during the first part of our day. This is a time to discuss, review, narrate and understand each chapter along with some devotional elements. The teaching varies according to teacher style and the age of the student. Preschool and kindergarten classes use story Bibles to teach the Scriptures, staying with the reading schedule as closely as is age appropriate. Class 1 uses a mixture of the Scripture and a story Bible depending on the specific Scripture we are reading. Beginning in Class 2, students read directly from the Scripture. The parent is the first teacher of the chapter. Ideally, children come to school having already read the chapter at home and discussed it as a family. The classroom becomes a second discussion of the passage, undergirding and supporting the parents’ instruction of their children.

Every classroom is unique during Bible reading time. Sometimes students sit on the floor, sometimes they sit at desks. The reading might be teacher led, student led, acted out, include questions and answers, narration, or summarizing. Teachers sometimes stop for discussion during the reading. They may have the children keep

a list of key words or repeated words. Teachers post timelines in the classroom that include the period divisions of Scripture. We also encourage conversation, questions, illustrating, and students sharing the highlights discussed at home when they read the passage with their family. One of the habits we are modeling to students is how to read and study Scripture on their own. Every day we are showing them how to look for God’s hand throughout Scripture and to keep verses in the context of all of Scripture. We also sow the expectation of a lifetime devotion to daily Bible reading. As a school we defer to parents by encouraging children to return home with questions, especially ones that enter the area of secondary doctrine or denominational differences. We do this partly because as an interdenominational school we represent a wide spectrum of Christianity and partly because we wish the conversation to continue between school and home.

Encouraging and instructing the faculty is another important element of our Bible reading. Once a week in morning faculty devotions we discuss the following week’s Bible text. This is one of the most uplifting, positive, and helpful moments of our time together as a faculty. Our objectives drive this, but each teacher also brings something unique to his or her presentation of the upcoming reading. This weekly meeting helps maintain consistency from classroom to classroom in the approach to the chapters. It also encourages faculty to meditate and apply the Word to ourselves before discussing it with little ones.

We asked some of our families with children of varying ages to give feedback regarding their use of the Bible readings and the effect it had on their families. One family responded, “It [the Bible reading] has helped our family stay focused on the most important thing during what is otherwise a very distracting time in life.” Another parent commented, “Frankly, none in our family had ever made a conscious effort to read through the entire Bible on our own before attending Regent. I

believe that reading through it every three years has been one factor that has encouraged us to read on our own.” Other families noted that the dual approach to home and school reading reinforced important concepts and kept them faithful to the task of passing on truth to their students.

No matter how God leads you to apply parents teaching their children, making it a top priority is the crucial element to success. We put Bible reading first thing in the morning to signify its importance. It may be difficult to convince parents that the kind of practices that shape truth, beauty, and goodness are worth the hard choices that come along with these habits. Sometimes choosing the very best activity over good ones is truly a struggle. Not all families will participate. One difficulty we have encountered is when children know this practice is expected by their teacher, but they have a family that is modeling rejection of a community expectation or even deception. This puts the child in a difficult position. This is one of the reasons we do not attach a consequence to failure to complete the Bible reading expectation. We encourage families through relational influence, but do not monitor those families or children who do not participate. Ultimately, we understand that parents are responsible to God for these choices, and we pray that they will catch the vision of the blessings and advantages which come when these important parts of the classical Christian education are completed.

These practices create culture. Together we touch and hold the Bible. We slog through the hard parts of Scripture, modeling how Scripture interprets Scripture. Families, students, and teachers are encouraged to read and discuss together. The practice fosters love and a taste for Scripture, love for one another, and ultimately love for God! The tool, whatever it is, can become burdensome and a requirement to complete rather than the joyful activity which it is intended. Just like the Israelites, as time passes, some families forget the

joy of the practice and quit altogether. It is our calling as teachers and administrators to refill the vision cup and remind them of the joy and benefits of the practice and be careful ourselves that we do not lose the joy of it.

We have the amazing opportunity to partner with families and make a lasting influence on their future. It isn't often that parents give access to influence their family to someone on the outside. We are responsible for what we do, what we encourage, and what we model, but at the end of the day, it is the parent who is held accountable for their own children. This thought gives freedom to the school and faculty. When we have done all we can as a school to promote truth, beauty and goodness; we can trust the outcome to our heavenly Father. May our experience spark some thoughtfulness about the need to use curriculum to continually pull parents into the transference of truth, beauty, and goodness to their children.

It is not the completion of the Scripture reading in which we find reward, but in the fruits of the habit. Regent desires to give parents the tools and spur the tools on to good use, not to burden families with a task to complete. This practice has produced fruit over the years and proven to be an important vehicle for fostering family and school partnership. This is only one example of a continuing conversation to cultivate school cultures that honor Deuteronomy 4:10, “Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.”