

“SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO”

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VOLUME XXVII NUMBER I

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# CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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FEBRUARY, 2020

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GROWING WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED:  
LESSONS FROM 20 YEARS

*by Diana Meadowcroft, Cedar Tree Classical Christian School*

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*Classical Christian Education:  
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The primary mission of this association is to promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

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# GROWING WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED: LESSONS FROM 20 YEARS

by Diana Meadowcroft, Cedar Tree Classical Christian School

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Most young moms have a birthing story. In fact, parents will tell you none of their children's births were the same. The birthing stories of ACCS schools are each unique as well. Nonetheless, as moms identify certain commonalities, so certain truths emerge with the birthing of a school.

As a mom who helped birth a school more than 20 years ago, I hope to highlight certain truths experienced in our school history with the prayer that they encourage others to continue the hard but good labor of discipling generations. As a teacher and administrator working beyond the pioneering stage, I hope to show that core principles never change.

**We walk by faith, not by sight.** This may sound cliché, especially as different groups of educators talk about the third wave of classical Christian education, but this biblical principle is foundational to any labor in the Lord. Like many schools birthed near the turn of the century, ours came about by young parents reading and sharing Douglas Wilson's *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* among ourselves and agreeing that we wanted what he described. We secured the guidelines from Logos and started working through the list.

That meant not only reading materials and building a unified vision, but also recruiting other parents who wanted to labor for something they'd never seen or ever done before. And we learned. We had to make different course corrections along the way, including some that

would have kept several of us from ever starting if we had known just how difficult it would be.

Nonetheless, a core group kept at it. We visited sister schools and asked questions from those even just a few years ahead of us in development. I found the ACCS conferences critical to remind me of why our labors mattered and to gain insight to the inevitable challenges of working with people and building an institution—not that I had a clear understanding of what that would look like. But that's why it's a faith walk.

It's also a prayer walk. *Ora et labora*—pray and work—became an early mantra for our community that continues to this day. In our effort to establish a school, we partnered with others who were establishing schools in the Portland area, south of our community in Washington state. Because we shared the same passion but not the same real estate, we could freely support one another by sharing our burdens and praying together once a month on a Saturday for our first couple of years.

As our school of parent laborers started in a church, we soon learned that fire marshals don't appreciate schooling efforts in a building only zoned for church. *Ora et labora* played a key role in our first nine years being housed by six different churches. In fact, we often found the Lord answering our prayers for a building the month before we were to start classes. In our cooperative years, we also voiced much prayer for specific teacher placement, and

*Diana Meadowcroft serves as the upper-school academic director at Cedar Tree Classical Christian School in Ridgefield, Washington, where she has served in various capacities since its inception 21 years ago. She has taught grammar grades as well as humanities in the logic and rhetoric stages, and oversees teachers. Cedar Tree Classical Christian School is an ACCS-accredited school in Vancouver, Washington.*

the prayers continue as new hires are made.

When our board found property to purchase, we added a new aspect to prayer and work: Saturday workdays. We invited our community to help us clear the property and pray for all it would take to get buildings on a former horse farm. Today, once-a-month Saturday work days continue as a way for families to work alongside each other and keep maintenance costs down on our 17-acre property.

These Saturday work days and the privilege of having a few years to look back on illustrate the truth that **many united hands make light the work**. As I look back on what God has done, I can name many people who were part of our early years, but not part of our work now. All had some part to play in building the school, and many more continue to do so. It is a *community* effort, and we seek to encourage that mindset even today: *we are partnering with families* and we all contribute to the health of our school.

I emphasize *united* because we did experience a painful split that, from a human standpoint, should have ended our labors. But it didn't. God answered prayers and provided the healing needed through key leadership and faithful people who trusted God to work as we sought to obey his instruction regarding conflict while laboring to provide an excellent Christian classical education.

Among many things I learned during that difficult season, the obvious lesson is **leadership matters. People matter**. Who you invite on your team—whether teachers, board members, or families—shapes your school. They make up our community. So be selective. And cultivate a community of grace.

I am so grateful for the conspiracy of friendship that fueled the school in its early years and continues to impact our learning community today. We prayerfully interview folks coming in, and we are careful not to entrust too much to new teachers or families when they join the school. We schedule events that encourage mixing of families as well as remind us of vision. All of our efforts—and we are always tweaking or considering new ways to educate and encourage our families—are rooted in our biblical

understanding of human beings: we are forgetful, and we always have room to grow.

**Don't be afraid to overcommunicate.** We ask our teachers and our parents and our students to work hard. We ask our students to wear uniforms and read books and write well and do many other things that they notice their neighbors not doing. We must remind them and their parents why their work is good and why it matters. And as new families join us and older families graduate out of the school, we have to evaluate the best ways to encourage parents to learn and support the hard work of learning their children are doing. In fact, this month a group of veteran moms at our school will meet to consider ways to connect with a new generation of moms.

**We know that we are always building.** We never truly arrive, even if all our classrooms are full (which they're not, but we're close). We realize we are investing our time, talent, and treasure—and some give all three—for the children that come after ours. We are laboring for a legacy. Remembering that future helps us give.

Two lessons in that investment process come to mind: **quickly learn limits, and value differences**. I didn't always know when to say no to something. Others close to me had to help me learn that a birthing process is always costly. Building effectively means bringing others into the labor that have different skills and perspectives, yet share the mission. I have seen such a mix help move the school forward in many ways, not the least through generous giving and lending early on to secure our property. Generosity of spirit always comes when we remember Who we serve and where we're going.

Preserving that legacy requires that **we begin with the end in mind**. We keep returning to that end so we stay on track and don't lose heart. I confess that I didn't have much of an end in mind when we started more than 20 years ago. All I could see was my three children and my need to educate them well in the fear of the Lord. Others also saw that need and joined together with me and friends and so we began.



Fortunately, through our begging and borrowing we learned that we should have a “Portrait of a Graduate.” Our teachers and headmaster developed one that guides our evaluation of our broad work together, along with our mission statement. We find that we even need to evaluate our ends statement to see if it really helps us evaluate what we do. We realize we would be able to use it more effectively if we simplified it, so our leadership team is in the process of doing so. And because the daily workings of our school often take precedent, our process is slow. But it is certain, because our leadership keeps it in front of us. We keep on building and improving.

Our school’s recent fundraising dinner embodies so much of what I’ve recounted. Unlike many schools, we have not coordinated an auction or fundraising dinner in at least five years because of the work it requires. God has graciously taken care of us through generous donors to our year-end letter appeal. However, a team of committed volunteers organized our November Gala as the public launch to our capital campaign to build an assembly hall. Our first permanent building in the midst of portables, it will open up more classroom space as well as allow our

whole student body to meet together under one roof.

This evening of celebration became the second milestone in my journey with Cedar Tree, a reminder that we’re laboring for legacy, building an institution to serve generations beyond us. The first milestone was my eldest’s participation in our first high school graduating class. Thirteen years walked across the stage, and I had a sense of a dream accomplished. But this milestone—an evening produced by many quiet hands, complete with images of experiences long-forgotten—showed me that we labored for the future. New hands would pick up the baton and run the race after I was done.

I am not done. But I know my years are numbered. In the meantime, I remind those with whom I team that we’re laboring in faith with prayer, treating people well, and preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We labor with the end in mind, always evaluating, seeking to be lifelong learners. We know that we can trust the One who cares more than we do, the One who rewards even a glass of water given in His name. We can trust that He writes the best birth—and *growth*—stories.



# TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF SEMESTER TESTS

by Bryan Lynch, Veritas School

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*“Cramming works fine in a pinch. It just doesn’t last. Spacing does.”*

Benedict Carey, *How We Learn*

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For readers of John Milton Gregory’s *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, the idea that students need frequent and consistent review over time is not new. In fact, it is one of Gregory’s laws: “Count reviews as always in order.” The use of frequent and involuntary formative assessment has long been an important piece in daily classroom practice at Veritas. But while we all tried to build in regular and varied reviews during the year, we found that the way we were approaching semester final exams actually encouraged that nemesis of good learning, cramming.

True, we required teachers to give students a written review guide at least a week in advance, with everything that might be tested. In addition, teachers were to conduct at least three full-period review sessions with students prior to semester exams. The trouble was, for most of us that meant three big review sessions in the week or so leading up to the test. So, the result was big tests, big reviews, big stress for everyone, (especially students)—and a lot of cramming. Not good, you might justly say.

This changed for us in 2016. That year we used Benedict Carey’s *How We Learn* as our source for a teacher training day. There were a number of very

interesting concepts that challenged some teachers’ previously held assumptions: guessing wrongly interferes with learning (Carey says this is false—wrong guesses can actually improve learning); always having a consistent time and place for study is best (false, according to Carey); people often remember more of what they’ve left incomplete (true, says Carey); and studying a concept immediately after learning doesn’t deepen learning much (true, according to Carey).

But an idea that had a big impact on our practice of semester exam preparation was the concept of distributed review, or spacing out review periods. Carey describes research into what intervals between when something is initially learned, when it is reviewed, and when it will be tested result in the best retention. While the algorithms behind the conclusions will be interesting to some, the bottom line is that review periods before a test should be spread out over a much longer space of time than we had been doing. The further away the test, the more spread there should be.

This principle is reinforced in an interesting piece in *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* ([https://www.dartmouth.edu/~cogedlab/pubs/Kang\(2016,PIBBS\).pdf](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~cogedlab/pubs/Kang(2016,PIBBS).pdf)). In it the author summarizes the

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results of many studies which “have demonstrated that spacing out repeated encounters with the material over time produces superior long-term learning compared with repetitions that are massed together” and “practice is more effective when spaced out over time, instead of massed or grouped together (equating total practice time).” While most studies have apparently focused on rote memory, there are others which have demonstrated that spaced practice also improves generalization and transfer of learning. Studies have demonstrated improved mathematics problem-solving, science concept learning, and long-term learning of English grammar in adult English-language learners.

Our practice of having all our major test review periods in the week or so before the semester exams was highly counterproductive. Not only did it not work to aid long-term retention, it encouraged a view of education—that it can and should be “crammed” in and then forgotten—that was antithetical to the classical education we said we valued, that is, a lifelong, thoughtful interaction with ideas.

For our next semester exam cycle we adopted a new approach. We kept the requirements of a complete review guide and three full-period reviews, but we put those reviews on an expanded schedule to push them much further from the test. For example, for our next semester exams for that school year (a semester is 18 weeks for us), material that would be tested at the end of the semester that was learned in weeks 1–5 were to be reviewed in week 12. Material from weeks 6–10 were reviewed in week 14. The final review took place in the week or so before the test. So, our three big reviews took place in weeks 12, 14, and 17, rather than having them all in weeks 16 and 17.

We make no claim that this schedule is ideally in line with the technical principles of spaced learning, and we’re always looking to improve it. However, students have consistently reported that they feel much better prepared for tests, they experience less stress during



final exams week, and they retain their learning better under the new schedule. This new approach to semester exams, together with the usual frequent and ongoing reviews of classroom concepts, has led to better learning and a more humane semester finals week. John Milton Gregory, were he here, would no doubt say, looking at us with eyebrow cocked, “no kidding.”

Looking back, it seems embarrassingly obvious—we should have seen it years ago. Spreading out major reviews over an extended period of several weeks, even months, rather than in the days prior to exams, works well for everyone. We continue to adjust the schedule, and, of course, students continue to be nervous during semester exam time. (And we’ve added a visit from baby goats in the office to our semester final routine—more because they’re fun and cute than because they’re necessary). But the days of high-stress semester exam cram weeks are, thankfully, long gone.

# ONE SCHOOL'S JOURNEY TOWARD LOVING EVERY STUDENT

by Denise Hollidge, Rockbridge Academy

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In Matthew's Gospel our Lord tells the story of the sheep and the goats. There He points out that our virtue is not shown in how we treat those who can repay us a debt, but how we treat those who cannot. It is our care for "the least of these my brothers" that expresses the life-giving reality of our relationship with Christ.

This can be a complex issue to wrestle with for Christians whose calling it is to aid parents in teaching their children. Admissions officers, administrators, and teachers who face decisions about admitting and retaining students with learning differences, may find the demands on time, expertise, not to mention finances, often appears to be a bridge too far. Christian schools should never be satisfied with giving preference to students who need less intervention and are, therefore, less costly to instruct. If we are excluding students, do we have a biblical basis for that decision? If not, are we making strides toward inclusion of all children who benefit from a classical Christian education? All children are complicated. And all children need to be loved and taught as the unique human beings they are.

This is a story of one school's journey toward loving every student. The story has ups and downs, and it is unfinished. I hope this story helps you and your school love all the students that God brings to you.

Twenty-five years ago, the founding board of Rockbridge Academy committed themselves to offering a classical, Christ-centered education to families who were desirous

of that end for their children. Rockbridge Academy opened its doors to children with disabilities, in part, because God in His good providence had provided a special educator as its first head of school. Additionally, the first director of instruction equipped teachers to level the playing field for students who demonstrated challenges with speed drills like math facts. Teachers were approved to give accommodations to students when they were warranted. The administration worked with parents who engaged specialists to administer psychoeducational evaluations. These administrators labored with the standards of the College Board to find ways to bring SAT accommodations to students who desired to attend college. With disabilities on the rise nationally, the administration continues to seek out resources to assist in the inclusion of all students who desire to attend Rockbridge.

In 2011, I joined the administration at Rockbridge. I had no special education background but had 10 years of experience teaching third grade at Rockbridge and among many other duties, I set my focus on solving a perennial reading problem. In third grade all the reading and writing skills come together. Often third grade was the place where a previously suspected disability became obvious to parent and teacher alike. Frequently, one child in a family would need a different school as a result. Some struggled with dyslexia, others with dysgraphia, and many times these reading and writing struggles were layered with attention challenges. Although we used an Orton-

*Since arriving at Rockbridge Academy in 2001, **Denise Hollidge** has filled the position of third grade teacher for ten years, director of instruction (K-12) for five years, and currently serves as the grammar school principal. Rockbridge Academy is an ACCS-accredited school in Crownsville, Maryland.*

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and to truly  
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Gillingham influenced reading curriculum, we moved along too quickly for those with reading delays. Many of these students needed more than accommodations—they needed remedial instruction and/or specialized assistance. Because we were unable at that time to offer remedial instruction, this often meant that I recommended the dissatisfying solution of a parting of ways or separation of families between two schools. After all, children must learn to read! After reading *Simply Classical, A Classical Education for Every Child* by Cheryl Swopes, I was inspired by the fact that classical education *was* for every child, but perhaps Rockbridge Academy was not.

Since the school did not have the expertise to assess students beyond a basic academic fitness, requiring parents to get a psychoeducational evaluation for their children before we were willing to approve accommodations became a requirement. Once these evaluations were in hand, both the school administration and the parents had guidance for next steps. I was growing in my ability

to point parents to remedial therapies outside the school, and I was more confident in establishing accommodations that were helpful and reasonable within the classroom. This allowed us to retain a few more students, but some still struggled to read and write and would eventually leave us by fifth grade. Despite baby steps forward and dogged disappointments, I continued to persevere. As Winston Churchill said, “Sometimes it is not enough that we do our best; we must do what is required.”

Over the years, God has brought professionals into the life of the school who have equipped me to think about student challenges better. These included parents who have pursued learning some of the best reading strategies for students with reading delays. Sometimes this was their calling or vocation. Sometimes this was due to their own children having learning challenges. Some were special educators. One was a speech and language specialist. Others were orthopedic therapists, educational psychologists, and even an educational therapist qualified



through the National Institute of Learning Development (NILD). This confluence of events has led to more success in identifying student reading delays as early as kindergarten and has given our staff the ability to offer not only accommodations, but remedial help within the very walls of Rockbridge Academy!

In the last few years, Rockbridge has required its grammar faculty to read *Reading Reflex, The Foolproof Phono-Graphix Method for Teaching Your Child to Read* by McGuinness and McGuinness in preparation for 10 hours of training by a specialist. This training involved teaching various reading skills such as phonemic awareness, blending, segmenting, manipulating, and comprehension. We have sent one of our administrative staff for certification in Phono-Graphix. This is an Orton-Gillingham influenced program, and we adapt their evaluation tool to assess all our K–2 students each trimester. Tracking each student's progress aids in determining K–2 students with reading delays. These students will receive one-on-one remedial reading lessons twice or three times weekly with our certified faculty member. This is exciting because delays are now being identified so much earlier. It takes data to help parents see the need for help. Last year, out of five identified kindergarten students with delays, four were able to catch up with their classmates with grade level work within the kindergarten year!

God also provided an educational therapist qualified through the National Institute of Learning Development (NILD) to work with some of our students in older grades. Through her, I became aware of a tool that, combined with the Phono-Graphix assessment, would add more helpful data for parents. The one student identified as making insufficient progress last year was offered the Search & Teach Scan. This NILD assessment measures pre-reading skills and gives parents the data necessary to understand their child's need for immediate therapies to assist them with their weaknesses. For the first time, I was able to identify students' challenges in reading before they finished kindergarten!

Moving into our newly purchased facility provided space to offer this therapist an office within the school building. Now she is our newly added, self-employed, independent contractor, and we can identify needs for accommodations and remediation, as well as refer parents to a godly Christian therapist housed within the school. This allows students to participate in therapy during the school day. This gives these early learners what they need by leaving the reading class that is currently at a frustration level to attend the therapy for reading at their instructional level. We can determine growth through the regular reading assessment we give our K–2 students each trimester. Some students catch up within the school year. Others need further therapy into the summer, while others need therapy with retention. All of this is done two or three years earlier than previously. We now have a vision for developing a small pool of specialists who can combine efforts to provide the remedial help students need at the earliest possible time.

Many, many opportunities the Lord gave us at Rockbridge to help students ended in what we might call “failures.” Students were identified late, received no remediation, and needed to go elsewhere, but we are making strides toward eliminating these roadblocks. Wherever you are in your school's journey toward serving every child, do not allow the difficulties to keep you from moving forward. Even the world understands something of the need for persevering in kindness toward others. Roman philosopher, Seneca, in his treatise *De Vita Beata* (*On the Blessed Life*, chapter XXIV) states, “Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a benefit” (or kindness). Make time for reading, researching, and growing to offer more benefit to your families. For a time, the costs may be insurmountable, your facility too restrictive, your personal knowledge base too limiting . . . keep going. The Great Teacher will help you. He is looking for servants who will feed the hungry and offer a cup of water to the least of these.

# POLICY 2.5: CEDAR TREE AND THE STATE

*Bylaws & Board Policy Manual, Cedar Tree Classical Christian School*

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## 2.5 CEDAR TREE AND THE STATE

- *Dates:* Adopted October 3, 2002; Revised May 14, 2009; July 21, 2011
- *Objective:* To establish the relationship of Cedar Tree to governmental entities which may establish requirements or guidelines for the education of minors.
- *Scope:* This policy applies to Cedar Tree Board, administration, and staff in their capacity as leaders of the school.
- *Definitions:* Governmental entities: includes federal, state, county, and local governments.
- *Minor:* a person who has not reached the legal age of adulthood
- *Guidelines:*
  - A. We understand the Bible to teach that the parents are responsible for the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical education of their children, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Dt. 6:6-9, 11:19-21).
  - B. We recognize that the prevailing modern culture seeks to remove God from education and thus ignores Him in relation to the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical development of students.
  - C. We also believe that we are to submit to governing authorities so far as they do not command us to do what is contrary to God's Word (Rom. 13:1-7).
  - D. Therefore Cedar Tree, as a classical Christian school which exists to educate students in God's truth, will voluntarily comply with governmental requirements insofar as doing so will not compromise the school's mission.
  - E. The following boundary limitations are established to guard against potential compromises which in time may stem from being a state-registered private school:
    - 1. Ability to effectively and biblically fulfill Cedar Tree's mission and vision.
    - 2. Being required to teach principles or content that is non-biblical, such as secular concepts of sex education, diversity training, Darwinian evolution, etc.
    - 3. Being required to approve as truth what God's Word affirms as untruth/non-truth.

4. Being required to approve as untruth what God's Word affirms as truth.
  5. Being required to hire people whose beliefs, values, and/or practices are in conflict with our mission and standards.
  6. Being required to adhere to regulations that are unduly burdensome, such that they may materially affect our ability to fulfill our mission and vision.
- F. When state legislation is passed and enforced that qualifies as a compromise to our standards, or a majority of the Board agrees that obeying the legislation would constitute a violation of our principles as described above, we will begin the appeals process and preparation for departure from state registration, but not drop our registration status until those avenues have proved fruitless.
- G. In light of the tentative nature of Cedar Tree's participation in the state registration process, it is deemed prudent for the School to avoid entanglements (such as tax-favored status, vouchers, scholarships, etc. that depend upon state registration) which would make withdrawal from registration unacceptably difficult. If Cedar Tree does financially benefit from state registration, the Board will handle those funds in a way so as not to become dependent on them for the regular operation of the school.
- H. For the purpose of establishing an accountability network regarding state registration, the Board should ask other Christian schools within the state to keep us accountable to the limits and controls set forth in this proposal.
- I. School vouchers: Cedar Tree does not accept any certificate or voucher issued by the government intended for parents to apply toward tuition at a school other than the public school to which a child is assigned.

*Cedar Tree Classical Christian School is an ACCS-accredited school in Ridgefield, Washington. Learn more at <http://www.cedartreeschool.org/>.*



# FIVE HABITS FOR KINDERGARTNERS TO ESTABLISH GOOD MANNERS (& HOW A CLASSICAL SCHOOL CAN HELP)

*by Kylee Bowman, Veritas Academy*

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Imagine you're a parent of little ones (say, a four- and six-year-old). Maybe you don't have to imagine, because you're already right there.

Imagine you've been given the opportunity as a family to attend an elegant occasion. Perhaps your husband won a prestigious award with a formal dinner reception to celebrate.

Raise your hand if you'd be excited to bring your little munchkins along for the crystal-clanging, delicacy-dining experience.

Okay, I'm sure there are some of you out there who do relish this sort of thing, and who have managed to raise exceptionally well-mannered young children who share your sentiments. Kudos, my friends. You keep doing your thing (and let me know your secrets)!

For the rest of us, a fancy outing with our littlest offspring sounds like a special form of torture. Visions of fidgety complaints, broken glassware, rejected food, noisy voices, and sibling squabbles dance in our heads.

There's a reason why these types of events are typically not kid fare. They're not designed for children, and that's okay! Young kids aren't inclined to sit peacefully, speak quietly, eat daintily.

Now, if it's an adult that you dread to have accompany you to such an occasion because of their boorish, brash behavior . . . well, isn't that one of those tricky societal



problems we wish we didn't have to encounter?

## MANNERLY KIDS BECOME CONSIDERATE ADULTS

You may say it all comes down to manners. And yes, in a big way, it does. Certainly there are many occasions that pop up in our daily lives (from our earliest to our latest years) that call for the exercise of good manners.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MANNERS?

But, you see, if you dig deeper it really comes down to having a heart of consideration. When you have that discipline in your heart—to see others around you and

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understand how your words and actions affect them—then it's easy to have good manners. Our manners are (or should be) simply an overflow of our sincere benevolence.

This heart attitude can (and should) be cultivated at a young age. It starts in our homes, in the menial moments of our days when we find opportunities to look out for and serve others. It continues at school, when the culture fosters a heart of service and decorum.

And here's where the reverse principle comes into play. By teaching good manners to kids at an early age, we can establish a habit of deference that turns the heart likewise. For many kids, giving priority to others around them just doesn't come naturally (there's that whole selfish sin nature thing going on). But in making the behaviors of good manners a habit early in life, it can help train their hearts and minds to pause and consider how they can serve their neighbors with daily kindness. Then, hopefully, those kids don't grow up to be the uncouth adults to which I referred earlier, but rather the type of person that you'd be pleased to accompany to any occasion.

## A SCHOOL CULTURE THAT CULTIVATES MANNERS

Here at Veritas, we start this process early, and it shows in our upper school students' behavior. Kids rise when an administrator enters the room. Boys allow girls to go first at meal times. There is an expectation of decorum—not a formal stiffness, but a simple call to serve our peers and treat others with respect as fellow image bearers and as authority figures.

It all begins in our kindergarten classroom, where veteran teacher Mrs. Lake models and institutes a culture of good manners and consideration among students to get them off on the right foot. Through her gentle yet firm spirit and kind demeanor, she helps the kids understand the importance and the joy found in



using good manners. It is an expectation within the class that not only brings structure but also peace to these often exuberant little ones.

There are special events scattered through the year that can serve to reinforce these disciplines and help the kids put good manners into practice, like our Tea Party (of course, celebrating the letter "T"). The kids put on their better-than-Sunday-best and sip from fine china teacups. The boys present the girls with flowers and pull out their chairs. And the kids (and adoring parents) just eat it up with pleasure!

In honor of this delightful little kindergarten occasion, our teacher, Mrs. Lake, put together a list of five manners that she works to establish in her classroom, emphasized not only by this event but all throughout the year. You can work with your little ones at home to help them master these manners (whether they go to Veritas Academy or not!) so that they can grow into respectful, loving, serving, thinking young men and women.

## FIVE MANNERS FOR KINDERGARTNERS IN A CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

1. Always say please and thank you when asking for something.

It's probably the most basic of all manners, but should never be overlooked. A cornerstone of good manners is having a heart of gratitude, and simply saying please and



expressing thanks when someone does something for you is foundational. So keep reminding and expecting this of your little ones, for favors big and small. It will take them far!

## 2. Boys should be gentlemen, even when they're little.

Some may call it sexist. We call it chivalry. It's not because women are lesser beings who are unable to pull out their own chairs or open their own doors. It's simply because we want our boys to recognize the value and beauty found in their sisters in Christ. So Mrs. Lake expects the boys in her class to act as gentlemen toward the girls. This includes:

- Holding the door for the girls
- Allowing the girls to line up first for their food
- Looking out for the girls, taking care of and protecting them

You can train your little guy to show respect to the little ladies around him, and to find ways to look out for her best interests. Mrs. Lake hopes that the boys in her class will take pride in taking care of the girls, stepping up to serve them out of Christlike love. It may be a tall

order for kindergartners—and sure we may only catch occasional glimpses in our young ones—but a respect for ladies starts early and continues through adulthood.

## 3. Boys and girls should be considerate of and kind to one another.

Yes, the consideration goes both ways between the genders. We don't have to tolerate the "boys are gross" and "girls have cooties" taunting typical of kids. God has made boys and girls to have unique and valuable qualities, and we expect our kids to treat one another accordingly and see the value that each other has. So that's why, at the tea party, the boys hand the girls flowers—with big smiles on both their faces—before pulling out their chairs. They tell each other how nice they look. In short, they appreciate one another.

## GIRLS, SHOW GRATEFULNESS

Along these lines, the girls are taught to thank the boys and be grateful for their help. When your young lady encounters a gentleman, encourage her to show thankfulness. It doesn't mean she's not a capable spirit herself when a boy says "ladies first," and by no means is it meant to squash our little girls' emerging abilities and independence. We need not be afraid that when a boy holds the door that he's also going to snatch her voice, her vote, or her rights. I daresay, holding a door is vastly preferable to the demeaning behavior of so many men in our culture. So, let us help our girls be thankful when a boy acts like a gentleman toward her.

## 4. Get dressed up in your finery.

It seems to be a lost art nowadays, getting all dressed up and fancy. Everything from restaurants to family gatherings to church has become less formal (and, yes, in many ways that can be a good thing). Let your kids



have the opportunity to get all dressed up and learn how to carry themselves appropriately. It's not an everyday occasion, but it's an excellent way for kids to practice the art of more formal etiquette. Believe it or not, many kids relish this, so don't be afraid to try it!

Besides being a squeal-eliciting photo opportunity, the little kindergartners at the tea party with their hats, ties, gloves, and lace serves as a wonderful chance for the children to practice good composure. In fact, just being all dressed up in that atmosphere seems to settle an air of formality upon them that the kids even welcome. It doesn't mean there won't be some stains or spills now and then, but don't let that stop you from trying it out once in a while.

#### 5. Table manners still matter.

At our tea party, kindergarteners sip tea from fine china cups, delicately nibble on treats, and ask politely for their sugar and cream. Well, at least they try to do these things as neatly as possible! The thing is, table manners do still matter. Give opportunities for your little ones to practice them, and help them understand why (like, it's not very appealing to see or hear your chewed-up food when you talk with your mouth full, and reaching across the table to grab what you want can easily lead to spilled drinks and messed-up clothing). Your child will thank you when they go on their first date or for their first lunchtime job interview that they have good table manners implanted in their behaviors.

If you think all of this sounds too stuffy for your average five-year-old, take heart—our kindergarteners love their tea party and all the pomp that goes along with it. Even the boys are puffed with pride as they march in their fine clothes and hand out their flowers. It's not for the everyday, but it's a welcome and a fruitful change of pace now and then!

When our little ones have the chance to appreciate good manners during these special times—and the



consistent reminders to practice them even in the everyday—then a heart of consideration has a chance to flourish within them and shine through at playtime, in the classroom, around the table, and out in the world.

# RECORDING GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

*by Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability*

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Minutes not only provide an indispensable record of deliberations in annual membership meetings, board meetings, and board committees, but they also offer a valuable history that reflects a prudent and responsible board. Minutes can also protect the board from litigation or other administrative proceedings. Additionally, board minutes may be one of the first places the IRS and other oversight groups look during an audit.

**Procedures for recording minutes.** It is essential that a ministry develop procedures to thoroughly document the proceedings of various corporate board meetings, including meetings conducted by conference call and web conferencing. The procedures should outline what meeting notes should be included, who is responsible for taking them, and when and how they should be translated into the formal minutes.

**Responsibility for recording minutes.** Who is responsible for taking board minutes? Is this the best person for the job? Is this the best use of this person's time, or could there be another person perform this function more efficiently in terms of organizational resources?

In many organizations, the board or organization's secretary is charged with the responsibility of taking minutes and, often, with additional review and signatory responsibilities. Although any staff member may record the minutes as the meeting is being conducted, it is

imperative that someone with knowledge of, and/or a background in, taxation and legal issues carefully review the minutes. The person designated as secretary should possess experience and education in these areas, as they can easily arise into potential problems.

Quick action can make a huge difference. Consideration should be given to having the organization's attorney and CFO review all board minutes soon after they have been prepared. This is especially important when potentially litigious issues or significant, finance-related issues are discussed by the board.

**Determining the level of detail to include in minutes.** Determining the amount of detail to include in (board) meeting minutes may be challenging. Some minutes are so skeletal in nature that they do not represent a complete record of proceedings. Conversely, other minutes reveal far too much detail even including what each member said about every issue. Neither of these approaches serves an organization well.

It is vital to adopt a policy regarding how much detail the board minutes should include. Do not leave such an important decision to the discretion of individual secretaries. In deciding how detailed minutes should be, consider how a court might judge board actions if the minutes were examined. Most courts use the "business judgment" rule to decide if directors are carrying out

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their duties. This rule does not look so much at what a board has done as how the board went about its actions. A director must act prudently, in good faith, and in the best interests of the corporation. No one has a crystal ball, and the best-intentioned decisions will sometimes turn out horribly wrong.

The minutes should contain sufficient detail so that if legal issues were to arise, the minutes would document the corporate body's prudence and responsibility in its decisions. However, minutes that read like a novel may subject the organization to undue liability should the minutes become discoverable in litigation. Therefore, it is important to establish balance. The minutes should be adequately substantive so that the intent of all actions is easily understood, even if the minutes are later read by someone who did not attend the original meeting. Minutes should identify any agenda items that were not covered, as well as all responsibilities delegated for future activities.

**Review and approval of minutes.** After board meetings, draft minutes should be prepared promptly and reviewed by relevant parties. Draft minutes should be distributed to board members for review before the next board meeting. Organizations should encourage their boards to perform thorough reviews of minutes and to be alert to any potential problems or conflicts. The board may then vote to amend the minutes, or approve them as is. The secretary may then sign them and incorporate them into the board minute book, a process that should occur in a timely manner. Board minute books always should be well organized and up-to-date.

**Meetings to which these procedures apply.** In addition to corporate board meetings, separate minutes should be maintained for each of the following:

- Executive committee meetings—If an executive committee of the board convenes between board meetings, separate minutes of executive committee

meetings should also be maintained and presented to the full board for ratification at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

- Audit committee meetings—If the organization utilizes an audit committee, the minutes of meetings should be recorded. The board should be presented with minutes of audit committee meetings, and should act on any recommendations the audit committee makes. This will inform and assure the board that the audit review responsibilities are being met.
- Annual meetings of members and nominating and compensation committees

**Board minutes reference systems.** Some boards find it helpful to assign a sequential code (numbers, letters, or a combination of numbers and letters) to each action of the board for the year (eg., Action 20\_\_-10) and to record them in the board minutes. This provides an efficient means of cross-referencing board actions and preparing indexes and board meeting minutes.

**Recording board policies.** The board may adopt policies concerning the way the board governs the ministry. To retain these policies for future reference by the board, it is often helpful to develop a board policy manual. New policies and changes to existing policies are recorded in the board policy manual following each board meeting.

Items to include in minutes. When taking minutes, include the following items:

- Date, time, and place of meeting
- Names of all voting board members, indicating whether each individual was present or absent (the listing of voting board members is the basis to determine if a quorum has been established in accordance with any quorum provisions in the bylaws)

- Names of any nonvoting board members, with these names listed separately from voting board members
- Names of all non-board members (guests) who are in attendance at the meeting, with these names listed separately from the board members
- Indication of whether a quorum of voting members is present (this includes determining if a quorum is present at the beginning of each session of the board; e.g., morning session, afternoon session, evening session, etc.)
- Who convened the meeting and an indication if proper notice was given to board members, as required by the bylaws
- Indication of whether this was a special or regular meeting
- Approval of the minutes of the most recent board meeting
- Approval of any actions by the executive committee or other committees during the interim of regular board meetings
- Notation as to any departures and reentries of board members to the board meeting (some boards only reflect changes in attendance at the beginning of each segment of a meeting; e.g., morning session, afternoon session, evening session, etc.)
- A record of every motion made, even if withdrawn. Names of people who make and second motions are generally irrelevant unless they ask to be recorded or the action is a related-party transaction.
- Names of those voting against or abstaining, only if they so request
- A record of all potential conflicts of interest
- A record of the outcome of each vote, to include

whether a motion was approved by ballot or by voice vote/consent instead of an actual vote

- All responsibilities delegated to board members and others for future activities
- Any questions left open or agenda items not covered
- A brief summary of reports given, with any written reports attached to the minutes as exhibits
- A note of the time of adjournment
- The board secretary's signature on the minutes

Additionally, at the corporate office, an organization should keep a formal minutes book with the minutes from each meeting.

**Examples of specific actions to include in board minutes.** Depending on the ministry's governance style, the following are examples of specific actions that should take place in the board meetings and recorded in the minutes:

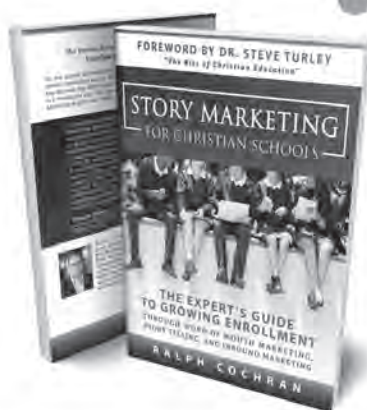
- Election of board members (for some membership-style organizations, board members are elected at the annual meeting of the members)
- Election of officers as provided in the bylaws
- Selection/appointment of committee chairs
- Approval of the annual budget (some organizations using the policy governance model establish budget limits and delegate the responsibility to staff of constructing the budget within these limits)
- Selection of the auditor for the current year as recommended by the audit or finance committee (this action may occur less frequently when a multi-year audit engagement letter is used)



- Acceptance of the audit report (this report initially may have been reviewed and recommended by a board committee such as the audit, finance, or executive committee).
- Discussion of any management or comment letter received from the auditor, and whether the auditor met with the audit/finance committee and/or the full board in person or by telephone
- Approval of the executive's compensation package (the details of the compensation need not be included in the minutes, but should be reduced to writing, perhaps in a memo to the file.) (Note: ECFA standards also require the board to be notified annually of the total compensation package of any member of the top leader's family who is employed by the organization.)
- Notation of the annual CEO review of performance and the establishment of performance objectives
- Prospective approval of any housing allowance arrangements for qualified staff
- Notation of a board member's conflicts of interest, reflected at least annually in the board minutes

Click here (<https://www.ecfa.org/Content/Governing-Board-Minutes-Sample>) to view sample board minutes in the ECFA Knowledge Center.

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**Douglas Wilson**

Co-Founder of The Association of Classical Christian Schools, Logos School, and New Saint Andrews College and Minister at Christ Church



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# FAT DOGS

by Tracy Robinson, Hickory Christian Academy

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*Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

—James 1:27

As is always the case when I travel to Haiti, I end up in a conversation that is convicting to my American Christianity. For a decade, Gayle and I have supported a particularly poor Haitian family, one that is considered poor even in the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. This is a family of a father, mother, and nine children, ranging in age from 21 years old to 3-year-old twins. All eleven of them live in a house that measures less than 150 total square feet, with one bed and a dirt floor. Were it not for our meager financial support, they would certainly be facing the threat of starvation. Even with the support, they still have to worry about sickness (they have all had malaria, dengue, and other tropical illnesses), clean water, mudslides, assault, and other issues that rarely cross our minds here.

During our trip last week, we were checking out the progress on an expansion to their house, when a puppy happened to walk by. Doing what Americans do, I picked up the puppy, handed it to my son, Sam, and took a picture. After all, who can resist a puppy!?



SYLVIE'S FAMILY

Our Haitian friends watched this with wonder, and the oldest son, Likanson, asked in his broken English, “Do Americans like dogs?” Sam quickly answered “yes,” to which Likanson replied, “Haitians hate dogs”. He then added the piercing question, “Are American dogs fat?” Sam answered, “Yes, many of them are fat, especially compared with Haitian dogs.” Likanson’s face revealed his heart.

As a background to those who have never traveled to a third-world-nation, dogs are considered pests and scavengers, who compete with the humans for food. They are treated with contempt, and often chased away with sticks or rocks. Most of the dogs we see in Haiti are on top of trash piles, trying to get any morsel of

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food they can find. In Scripture, we see that this battle between man and dogs for food has lasted for thousands of years in poor nations. In Mark 7:27, Jesus says, “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

When Likanson asked about fat American dogs, what he was really thinking was this: “In Haiti, my brothers and sisters are starving. My community cannot find enough food for everyone to share. But, in America, even the dogs have an overabundance.” He holds this view, not as a critique of Americans, but in awe that a nation could possibly be so wealthy that even dogs (detested animals to them) are fat (and often clothed). I do not bring up this story as an accusation toward American animal lovers. I have a spoiled dog myself. Instead, I bring it up to point out the vast economic chasm that exists between America and most of the remaining world.

Before leaving America, I announced our intentions for this trip, especially in light of the devastation left behind from Hurricane Matthew last month. I had scores of people offer donations to help the cause, and ended up receiving over \$12,000 in donations. To put that in perspective, with the average Haitian earning around \$500 per year, we raised 24 times an average annual salary in 2–3 weeks, without really breaking a sweat!

This takes me to the Scripture I led off with at the top of this page.

In James’ epistle, in a single verse, he defines a true, “pure, undefiled” believer by his actions. In other words, if you claim to be an authentic Christian, there are two characteristics that should define you to the rest of the world, and set you apart from those who are lost. I will discuss them in reverse order.

## 1. TO KEEP ONESELF UNSTAINED BY THE WORLD



BOWLS OF RICE AND BEANS BOUGHT BY OUR OWN FOLKS. WE HAD ENOUGH TO PROVIDE ABOUT 20,000 MEALS.

We all know that there is an ongoing battle between the spirit and the flesh within each of us. The things that I know I should be doing, I choose not to do, and the things that I know I should not be doing are very appealing to me (Rom. 7:15–17). No amount of trying real hard can get us over this hump. As Paul says in Rom. 7:25–25, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Only through Christ’s victory over sin and death can we live righteously, but as James points out, once we are saved, we are expected to live apart from the stains of the world. Combining these two Scripture passages, we see that in order to display authentic Christianity, our lives should be defined by righteousness, but with an understanding that that righteousness can only come through the power of the Spirit placed in us, through the sacrifice of Jesus





THANKSGIVING IN HAITI

Christ. One thing I would add is that righteousness is defined by God alone, not by man. We tend to add our own asterisk to certain situations so that God's will matches our personal preferences. God's will is defined in God's word. Anything we add or subtract voids the truth because it becomes God's word PLUS my word, based on my interpretation, to accommodate my own flesh (Rev. 22:18–19).

## 2. TO VISIT ORPHANS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR DISTRESS

To understand the magnitude of this statement, one must understand the context of history when this was written. In the first century, women and children did not have the opportunity to work for themselves. The only hope a woman had in those days was to marry the right guy so that he could support her, while she, in turn, provided a home and family for him. If the husband/father died, the widow and her children were immediately in crisis. There was no social security check, no life insurance policy, and no government welfare program. Unless someone came to their rescue, the widow and children were in danger of starvation (I Kings 17:10–12). However, if someone did decide to take care of them, they did so with the understanding that the widow and orphan children had no means to pay them back. The message here is clear. While speaking specifically of widows and orphans, James is instructing

us to minister to those who could not possibly return the favor, ultimately in the fashion that Jesus chose to die for each of us, knowing that we can never repay Him.

This is why I love going to Haiti, and why many of you love ministering to someone, wherever that may be. It is the opportunity to invest in someone who can never invest in me in the same way. In my American abundance, if I can share just a fraction of that surplus with a child who is starving, what better picture of the gospel message can I display? Our Savior saw our desperate condition here on earth. He saw the sin we fall prey to, the pride we embrace, and the world in which we live, and chose to leave the splendor of Heaven to rescue us. We were literally starving spiritually, and He gave us the bread of life. As Paul put it so eloquently,

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being found in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*  
—Philippians 2:5–8

In my daily routine at home as a parent, or at school as headmaster, my desire is that my privileged children would understand the importance of serving others and giving from their surplus. HCA is a blessed people, and it is so easy to get snuggled up in our comfort zone and forget that much of the rest of the world is in crisis. I challenge you to seek out someone who fits the “widow and orphan” mold and invest in them, expecting nothing in return. As a Christian, that is what God requires of us, along with personal holiness. And, I don't know about you, but as an American, I want to be known for my selfless, sacrificial giving, not for my fat dog.

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*Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, ask where  
the good way is, and walk in it. – Jeremiah 6:16*



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