

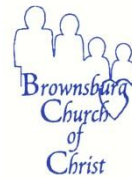
Kingdom Living at School

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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PM Assembly



Introduction:

Sadly, all too often, we give young Christians short shrift in the kingdom. We talk about you as the future of the church, rather than recognizing that anyone who is a Christian today is the present of the church. In other words, we must not act like teenagers who are Christians can be overlooked as we consider the life changed by Jesus Christ. And if you are a teenager or young Christian, don't think you have made a positional change that doesn't affect how you live until you get out of school and really start living life. You are living life right now. Therefore, as we talk about all the places where the kingdom manifesto in the Sermon on the Mount should impact us, we need to talk about school. Whether we are talking about middle school, high school, college or any other level of education where Christians might be, let's consider some important principles that impact our lives while at school. No doubt, our modern concept of school didn't exist in the Bible times. Therefore, Jesus didn't say, "Live like this at school." However, I think there are several fundamental principles that can be applied to the way many students live in our modern school systems.

Discussion:

- I. School is not the most important activity you are involved in (**Matthew 6:33**).
 - A. I know what I'm about to say is tough. You've been going to school since you were 5, maybe even before. You have spent more time in school than in any other activity you've ever done (except sleeping for some of you). It may seem to be the overarching, governing activity in all of your life. Everything seems to center around school: your schedule, your activities, even your recreation. Most of your friends were met at school. You are being told by your parents, peers, and professors that your education is going to set the tone for your life. You may even get the picture that there is nothing more important than what you do regarding your education. After all, it determines what college you get in, what job you get, how much money you make, what kind of house you live, what kind of cars you drive, what kind of clothes you wear. Can I shock you for a moment?
 - B. Your education is important. It is more important that the tv shows you watch, than the songs you listen to on the radio, than the entertaining books you read. It is more important than the games you play. It is more important than the amount of sleep you get. Certainly, your education will impact you in ways that little else will. However, it is not the most important thing in your life. I know it seems like everything revolves around school, but that must not be true. If it is, you are in trouble spiritually. According to **Matthew 6:33**, the most important aspect of your life is not your secular and civil education; it is your walk in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - C. In the last lesson of this series, I told your parents (and perhaps you if you have a job) not to let work become their master. The same should be said of school (cf. **Matthew 6:24**). You simply can't serve two masters. Regrettably, as our education system becomes more and more all-encompassing of so many aspects of our lives, sports, entertainment, music, friendships, etc., many of you are letting it be your master. Nothing is more important to you than whatever is connected with school. This is not just a matter of attending the assemblies and classes of the church when they conflict with school events, though sometimes that will be at issue. This is about what governs your life. Does school govern your walk with the Lord or does your walk with the Lord govern your schooling? If there is nothing more important to you than making sure you get into a certain college, get a certain scholarship, pursue a certain line of work, get a certain grade in a certain class, then you are not seeking the kingdom first; you are letting school be your master. Do you find that you do not have time to study your Bible, pray, be with other Christians, because you are so busy trying to get an A or make all of your extra-curricular school activities? Do you find that you don't want to mention your involvement in the church or your relationship with Jesus because you are afraid it will impact how you are viewed at school? Do you find that you live differently in the halls of the school than in the church building? If so, you are not seeking the kingdom first; you are letting school be your master.
 - D. The issue here is not to treat your education as unimportant. Rather, the issue is to remember that even your education should have a goal. The goal is not to get you a good job or even your dream job. The goal is not to make you a lot of money. The goal is not to win you awards and the competition of who is smartest.

The goal is to let your education, like every aspect of your life, be in submission to helping your walk in the kingdom. It is a means to help you serve God and serve others (cf. **I Peter 4:10**). I obviously don't want you to be an ignoramus who can't hold a good job and provide for yourself or your family, who lives on the street begging for bread. But I will say, in **Luke 16:19-30**, I'd rather you be Lazarus than the rich man.

- E. This is no excuse to ignore your education while you lazily play video games, sleep until noon, and generally just mooch off society. This is keeping the importance of your education in place. Please remember that when this life is over and you stand before God in judgment, He isn't going to care what your GPA in high school or college was; He isn't going to care how many academic scholarships you received or which colleges you got accepted to; He isn't going to check to see if you were first chair in the band or orchestra; He isn't going to ask if you were team captain of the State Championship team; He isn't going to worry about how many awards you received in school; He isn't going to ask you how many classes you passed or failed; He isn't going to be impressed if you were Valedictorian; He won't care if you made State Choir. He will care about one thing and one thing only: how close are you to Jesus? Please, don't let school come between you and Jesus, no matter who is pressuring you. Seek God's kingdom first.

II. Beware of false teachers (**Matthew 7:15-20**).

- A. Arguably, we spend more time with school teachers in the first 20 to 25 years of our lives than we do with anyone else. That means these teachers can have a tremendous impact on us. Sadly, there are many of these teachers who have an agenda. They don't simply want to make sure that you know how to work mathematic equations; they don't simply want to make sure you understand the formulas that can help you study the world scientifically; they don't simply want to make sure you know the rules of grammar and speech so you can communicate clearly. Some of them use these various disciplines as a means to get you to adopt their worldview. Some present themselves as free thinkers who want to set you free from whatever limiting viewpoint you have. They seem harmless enough, but by the time they are done, they have ensnared you in the world and sin. And this happens more and more as you advance in higher and higher levels of education. Watch out for false teachers.
- B. Examine the fruit of their teaching. When someone tries to teach you that science teaches there is no God, examine the fruit of that. When someone tries to teach you that all religions are equally valid, examine the fruit of that. When someone tries to teach you that Jesus Christ couldn't have risen from the dead as the Bible says and that He is nothing more than one possible way to be in union with the divine oneness, examine the fruit of that. In fact, don't wait until someone starts teaching you this stuff; consider the fruit now. What would a world be like if people actually lived by the logical conclusions of these atheistic, post-modern, or transcendental teachings?
- C. No doubt, sometimes you may have to creatively answer questions on tests and in essays. There is nothing wrong with answering a question on a test that says, "The book says such and such is the answer," or "The teacher has taught that such and such is the answer." But do not compromise the faith or the truth just to get an A on a test or in a class. If someone stuck a gun to your head and asked you to deny Jesus or they'll shoot you, we would say that is persecution and you need to be willing to die for Jesus. But if someone pulls out a grade book and asks you to deny Jesus or they'll give you an F, we run for cover crying that surely God understands and it is just something we have to do to survive in this world.

III. Don't let school be a popularity contest (**Matthew 6:1-18**).

- A. I know this may seem like an odd point based on **Matthew 6:1-18**. But I think the principle is valid and an extension of the point of that passage. In **Matthew 6:1-18**, Jesus says that we must not practice our righteousness to be seen and glorified by other people. He says that if we are seeking the accolades of people, when we have received them, that is all the reward we are going to get. Sadly, one of the biggest problems for young Christians is the popularity hierarchy in school. Let's face it, being a Christian who is faithfully walking with the Lord, allowing His teachings and example to change how you behave on Friday nights; change who you are friends with; change what really matters to you; change how you treat the undesirables; change what shows you watch, what music you listen to, and books you read; change how you submit to the school rules and authorities; change the words you will and will not say and the jokes you will and will not laugh at will probably put you clearly in the nerd camp at school. Far too many Christians have pushed off maturing in Christ or even abandoned Christ because what is most important to them is receiving the praises of their peers at school.
- B. Sadly, this pursuit of our peers' praise can cause us to adopt foul language. It can lead us to pursue wrong behavior: drinking, drunkenness, immorality, rebellion, lying, cheating, disrespect of those in authority, etc.

It can lead us to treat others with contempt. Ask your parents if they regret how they treated the fat kids, the nerdy kids, the brainy kids, the ugly kids, the weird kids, the special needs kids, the underclassmen. I've heard many adult Christians who were the "cool kids" in school look back on their years in school with regret because of the way they treated the "less than" students. What's even worse, I've known of school relationships impacting Christian relationships. Two kids grew up in the same church as friends, but they get to high school and one of them is part of the in crowd and one of them isn't. They're both Christians but suddenly the "nerdy" Christian is less of a friend to the "cool" Christian than the worldly cool students are. Even if they all stay "faithful" to the Lord into adulthood, this stigma can carry on in the relationships impacting the work of the church. Don't be part of this. You may be the cool kid at school because of your athletic ability, your grades, your involvement in the band or the choir, your car, your clothes, your family, or whatever makes people cool in your school. But if you let that interfere with your relationship with God and His people, if you let that hinder you from pointing your peers to God, if you put that above submission to the Lord, then you better get used to treasuring that picture in your yearbook as Most Popular, Most Talented, Most Likely to Succeed, Most Whatever because that is all the reward you are going to get.

- C. Secondly, that should cause you to avoid getting caught up in the gangs and cliques that can form in schools. These groups, whether officially (as in a gang) or unofficially (as in mere cliques) compete for who is the best, brightest, toughest, coolest. They are in a competition for the praises of their peers and they treat folks in the other groups with contempt and disdain. The name-calling that goes along with that approach to our peers at school is clearly wrong as demonstrated in **Matthew 5:22**. When you label those other groups with derogatory names—nerds, idiots, losers, weirdos, etc.—you are liable to judgment. Don't get involved in that. Seek the reward that comes from God by living as a kingdom citizen even at school.

IV. Be salt and light (**Matthew 5:13-16**).

- A. Do you know what the most important part of being at school is? It's not the grades. It's not the recommendations from teachers and administration for further schooling, scholarships, or jobs. It's not the extra-curricular activities. The most important part of being at school is your opportunity to shine the light of Jesus Christ into the lives of so many people during some of the most impressionable years of their lives. You have an opportunity right now that will not be repeated in quality and magnitude ever again. You attend classes, eat lunch, participate in sports, band, and choir with a group of people that are actively trying to figure out who they are and who they are going to be for the rest of their lives. If you have already determined that you are and are going to be Jesus' disciple, you can shine that light into their lives like no one else. What an opportunity.
- B. Thus, when Jesus talks about being salt and light in **Matthew 5:13-16**, he is not talking simply to your parents about how they conduct themselves at work. He is talking about you and how you live at school. Are you shining your light? Do you talk to people about your faith in Jesus? Do you invite people to studies with you? Are you learning how to share the gospel with others? Are you trying to defend the cause of Christ against the onslaught of our modern culture?
- C. Just this week, I heard the story of a young man who is 17, a senior in high school, who has multiple home studies with groups of kids from school. He meets with other Christians to study and has invited non-Christians to join. And his big concern is that he is not bold enough in his defense of the Lord. He recognizes that the opponents of the Lord are extremely vocal in their opposition against the Lord and His truths and is concerned that he is not as vocal in his proclamation and defense of the Lord. If only all of us, young and old, in school and out felt this.
- D. How do you want your classmates to remember you? The lead jock? The brain? The drum major? The class clown? The talented musician? Or the one who tried to help save their souls and tried to help them serve the Lord? On the day of judgment, which one of those do you think you'll wish they had remembered you as? I know I look back with regret on my high school and college years, the missed opportunities, the lost chances, the bad influences. I would spare you that. Get your light out of the basket and let your salt get out of the shaker. Let your classmates and teachers see Jesus Christ in you. Let them learn to glorify God by watching and listening to you. And don't worry about the ones that mock you for it (cf. **Matthew 5:10-11**). After all, as we learned in our last point, you weren't longing for their praises anyway.

Conclusion:

Don't wait until you are out of school to start your kingdom living. If you aren't living as a kingdom citizen now, the fact that you got baptized isn't saving you. Step up and live as a child of the King right now while you are at school.