

The Return of
Dear Parents...

*Selected Columns On Communicating
the Christian & Classical Vision to Families*

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Logos School Superintendent**

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DEDICATION:

To Julie, my sweet, circumspect wife,
thank you for the gentle urging to finally get
this put together.



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INTRODUCTION

As of this writing, Logos School has been serving families from many towns around and including Moscow, Idaho, for over twenty years. Logos School opened its doors in September of 1981. It represented the concerted efforts and convictions of primarily three individuals: Doug Wilson, Shirley Quist, and Larry Lucas. Their goal was to provide high-quality Christian education for children. These three people were Logos School's first and founding board of directors. I was hired in January of 1981 to be Logos School's administrator.

Logos (which means "word" in Greek) began with eighteen students in rented facilities at the Paradise Hills Church of God. Primarily through word-of-mouth the school grew quickly. Parents say they are most pleased with the dedicated, loving staff members, the smaller class sizes, and the consistently high level of academic and spiritual encouragement their children receive. As the school expanded in size and scope, bus service and a preschool were added (bus service was later dropped). At all levels, the math, reading, science and other disciplines are continuously and systematically reviewed and upgraded to qualitatively increase the learning of the students. For example, in 1993, with the assistance of a qualified school parent, the entire elementary science program was redesigned and a new Logos Elementary Science guide for teachers was written and published.

The school moved to 110 Baker, a former roller rink, in November of 1987, after extensive prayer, fundraising, and remodeling. Subsequent improvements have included the addition of a two portable classrooms, carpeting, an outstanding library, and finally, in 1999, a field house. The school's annual auctions continue to provide much-needed funding for capital improvements to the facility, as well as discretionary money for the teachers to use in their classrooms.

In 1990, Doug Wilson, the key founding board member for Logos, wrote a book entitled *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*. The book recalled how, over its ten year history at that time, Logos School had attempted to follow the classical, Trivium model, as described by Dorothy Sayers in her 1940's article, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, published in the National Review. Doug's book, published on a nationwide scale through Crossway Publishing, produced so much interest in the classical approach that several Logos staff members helped form the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (A.C.C.S.) to practically assist people in forming their own classical schools. This organization continues to offer conferences and practical assistance to forming and growing A.C.C.S. school members in every region of the United States. Logos is a charter member of A.C.C.S. and annually sells many of its administrative and curriculum materials to these schools and other people around the United States.

As the administrator for Logos since day one, I have been privileged (and challenged) to see the school go through the many changes mentioned above. Because of the uniqueness of the kind of education we offer, not only have hundreds of children been blessed with a good academic foundation, even I of the thick skull, have learned a few things. Our Lord Himself said that a student doesn't rise above his teacher. That makes me all the more thankful that we have obviously hired very intelligent people to teach these little ones over the years. But I, too, have been forced to try to learn a plethora of new tricks, since I have taught classes of some sort every year-it has been no easy feat to stay ahead of these kids. After all, as I often tell my high school classes, in my defense, they need to remember I am a victim of a government-designed education.

Another aspect to my work here has been to construct a monthly newsletter. In the early years, this mostly looked like a school version of those Christmas form letters we all get in spades each winter. Yawn. As time went on, however, I got increasingly excited by all the new things I saw the kids and the school learning through applying the classical philosophy. I also got increasingly excited, but in the opposite polarity, by all the things I saw our culture and government foisting on families, in the name of education. So, rather than use my newsletter column

CHAPTER ONE

FATHER KNOWS BEST: FAMILY ISSUES

Logos School has, from day one, committed itself to assisting, not replacing families in educating their children. This commitment has caused us, at times, to make decisions, policies, and day-to-day practices, that treat our families differently from the way our culture treats families. We really do believe that, despite some appearances these days, God really did know what He was doing when He designed the “nuclear” family structure to be the building block of every lasting society. And within that structure, every member has a God-designed role. Unlike the National Public Radio t-shirt that proclaims, “A family is a circle of friends who love you!”, God proclaims in His Word that a family is comprised of a father, a mother, and children, all of whom have very serious responsibilities that God set forth.

We do have families at Logos that for a variety of reasons, some from sin and some from God’s acts, do not have every role present or functioning as God designed. Nevertheless, as we teach and love all the children and respect each parent’s authority, we do not redefine the biblical family based on exceptions. The following columns address some of the ramifications to the way we view families.

THE (OFTEN IGNORED) PREREQUISITE TO A GOOD EDUCATION

Slowly and weightily, Pa said, “Miss Wilder, we want you to know that the school board stands with you to keep order in this school.” He looked sternly over the whole room. “All you scholars must obey Miss Wilder, behave yourselves, and learn your lessons. We want a good school, and we are going to have it.”

When Pa spoke like that, he meant what he said, and it would happen.

(Little Town On the Prairie, by Laura Ingalls Wilder)

“And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

The above verse from Ephesians is often used by Christian educators, and rightly so, to demonstrate God’s view of the kind of instruction children are supposed to receive, that is, a completely God-centered one. What isn’t pointed out often enough from this verse is to whom the imperative is given, that is, the father. I know it isn’t pointed out enough because so many fathers, even in our church-saturated culture, have ignored the application of this clear teaching. To be fair, many fathers do consider this verse, but believe they are obeying it adequately by regularly taking their families to church. The application is far more encompassing.

Not long ago I had a conference with a mom who was agonizing over whether or not to have her child repeat a grade. She was asking my advice on what factors she should consider in making this tough decision. Instead of spending much time on answering her immediate questions, I told her as diplomatically as possible that this decision which was weighing on her so heavily was not hers to make; it was her husband’s. At first I was concerned that I may have offended her, but instead I had the joy of almost visibly seeing a burden fall from her shoulders. She was still understandably concerned for her child, but obviously had more peace knowing that

indeed it was her husband's decision, and, being the good father he is, he would gladly assume that decision. (By the way, he did assume it, and decided to have his daughter repeat. It was a very wise decision and she did very well in adapting to her new class.)

Unfortunately, that type of father is all too rare in the Christian community, not to mention our general American culture. It hasn't always been so, as evidenced by the brief excerpt above from the Little House series. Fathers were not always the emasculated, "sensitive", fearfully non-assertive wimps our current cultural wind would have them be. I don't know if Mrs. Laura Wilder (eventual sister-in-law to the teacher in the book) was a Christian, but her father was certainly recognized as the authority for his children's education. American history shows us that he was not unique or unusual in his assuming of that role in that era, circa late nineteenth century.

God designed mothers to be the nurturers to their children, and as such, they naturally take a very active part in their children's education. Moms feel the 'nest-leaving' far more deeply than do the dads. When that first little one starts kindergarten, it's often mom who sheds the tears and diligently scrutinizes every aspect of the school's instruction over those first critical years. As I've mentioned to many people, I would rather meet with a concerned dad vs. a concerned mom any day; I readily admit that I fear facing what I call the "Mother Bear Syndrome", based on the proverb. You know, the one about meeting a mother bear deprived of her cubs. It's not a pretty picture. Nevertheless, having designed mothers that way, God still insists that dads take the lead in the education of their children.

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How is this to be done? First, it means recognizing that it is the God-ordained role of a father to take the responsibility for his children's welfare and education. This will likely mean some type of delegation of tasks, but the responsibility cannot be averted. The father is the Elder, the Superintendent, and the Chief Justice in the home, all the while being a true gentleman. Just like the captain of a ship, who, though not at the helm when the ship runs aground, will still be the one held responsible, dads must be ready to acknowledge that any failure in the home is their responsibility.

Dad should be at every formal parent-teacher conference. He needs to know what his kids are studying and how well they're doing. (With four kids in school, I know how hard it is just to look at all their papers each night, but Julie lays them out for me, and it happens.) All problems in school, academic and disciplinary, should receive top priority by Dad. And a "Well done!" from Dad should be frequent and meaningful. All our current school-board members are fathers of children in Logos School. This is not a requirement, nor are women excluded by policy; this is just the way it is, and I am very grateful!

A word about fatherless homes: I am very pleased to see that in the Christian community surrounding Logos School, many single moms are actively supported and encouraged by families with fathers fulfilling their biblical roles. As a school, we seek to do the same for single moms seeking to raise godly children. The scriptural mandate of caring for widows and the fatherless is very appropriate to these situations.

A vast number of problems we currently see in both the government schools and Christian schools could be dispelled if just the Christian fathers reassumed their God-given privileges and responsibilities toward their precious sons and daughters. Pray for and encourage those fathers you know who are doing their most important jobs well.

It may be an anachronistic practice in our society, (though based on the numbers of families I know who use it often, I don't think it's that outmoded) but regardless of its lack of trendiness, spanking is still alive and well-placed at Logos School. Once in a rare while I have applying families balk at the idea, but even then, frequently their concern is that we do not supersede their authority to spank. God forbid! Usually I am able to reassure those families that we fully intend to support their authority in the school - that's why we spank in the first place; in loco parentis.

AN HONORABLE TRADITION - SPANKING IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

In one of the best children's stories I've enjoyed reading to my own children, Frances, a young badger, has been having a hard time staying in bed and going to sleep. Things in her darkened room concern her and she goes to discuss them with her parents...several times. Her parents calmly and wisely address her concerns and send her back to bed. Finally Frances goes to her father in his bed and, after waking him with her concern about the wind moving the curtains, her father replies:

"If the wind does not blow the curtains, he will be out of a job. If I do not go to the office, I will be out of a job. And if you do not go sleep now, do you know what will happen to you?"

"I will be out of a job?" said Frances.

"No," said Father.

"I will get a spanking?" said Frances.

"Right!" said Father.

"Good night!" said Frances, and she went back to her room. Frances closed the window and got into bed."
(From *Bedtime for Frances* by Russell Hoban)

That book was published in 1960, back before the enlightened age in which we live that has come to see spanking as a Neanderthal means of discipline, if not actual child abuse. During my graduate work years ago, I found myself one evening as the sole defender, among many school administrators, of this ancient practice. The others argued heatedly that "violence begets violence", as though that little phrase could write off centuries-old, successful child-rearing practices. When I pointed out that the most secure and well-loved students I knew came from homes that included spanking as a normal punishment, one administrator told me straight-faced, "Well, if children are secure, they can stand a certain amount of problems in their homes." Arrrggghhh! Yes, and if children are born educated, they can put up with the nonsense in the public schools, right? What logic!

Historically in our culture, Christians and non-Christians alike used to be steeped in the biblical traditions and principles of raising children. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was one verse (albeit paraphrased) every parent knew (Prov. 13:24) and frequently practiced. And, strangely enough, kids were better behaved as a result. I do not have the space or time to go into why this very healthy practice has become virtually a crime. The saddest aspect of its decline is that even many Christian parents have meekly accepted the world's way of "disciplining" children and have abandoned the clear biblical imperatives. I don't know how many times, during a conference with parents of a rowdy student, I have heard the comment, "We tried spanking him, but it didn't seem to make any difference." "Tried"? Do we "try" feeding our kids to see if they grow? If we don't notice a significant change overnight do we stop the feeding "experiment?"

Logos School believes that God knows more about raising children than our current culture does, or ever will. Therefore, I have had the honor of reinforcing, through the use of a wooden paddle (actually, a variety of sizes) in my office, the good discipline begun in many homes. Here are some characteristics of a good spanking: