

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: My wife and I are torn between sending our 8th son to a Christian high school, or letting him attend the public high school a couple of blocks away. Could you give us some input for us to consider?

ANSWER: The goal of a Christian education should always be to help parents equip their children to fulfill the Great Commission.....to "go ye therefore...." (Mt. 28:19-20). Christian schools should never be used to cloister our children from the secular world; they should be used to prepare children to transform the secular world. I realize that much of the same "garbage" happens in Christian schools, but the set-up and under-pinnings allow students at a Christian school to avoid some significant faith challenges they would have to face daily in a public school. The question should not be "should my child be launched out into the secular world, but "when".

With this understanding in mind and without knowing your 8th grader, I have to be somewhat general, but the following thoughts should help:

1. First and foremost...**know the level of your son's spiritual maturity.** Is he solid enough in his faith to do a good job at being "the salt and the light" (Mt. 5:13-14). Or, will he get swallowed up by the world of public high school? **Spiritual maturity varies with each individual.** Hopefully, after 9 years of Christian education a child will be well equipped to enter a public high school. This might not be the case with your son. (By the way, I believe the primary responsibility of Christian education and "heart-shaping" falls on the parents, not the school.)

2. Consider the size of the high school and the social skills of your son. Will he be able to find, make, and keep good friends in this environment? **Social relationships will make or break the high school experience.** Will these friends have the same moral and spiritual values as your son? Is your son a leader or a follower?

3. Over the years, has there been an **ongoing conversation, expectation, and excitement initiated and fueled by mom and dad** that he will enter the "mission field" of public high school in the 9th grade. **Preparation is critical.** This choice should not be "sprung" on him the year before. Have you as parents imparted to your son, a vision of lifestyle evangelism that he will carry with him into the public school? Can your son articulate his faith? Can he live his faith among unbelievers?

4. You must **investigate what Christian "support system"** exists in the school he will attend. Will he have other Christian friends that he knows are going to attend this public high school? Is there a "Young Life" or "Ambassadors for Christ" program? Is he active in and supported by his church youth group?

5. **Listen to and talk with your son often and personally** about how he feels about this issue. Regardless of the final choice, does he understand the

ramifications? Give him the option of changing school after the first semester (No sooner...unless he is in physical danger.)

6. Be careful **not to spare him that which might make him stronger** because **YOU** can't handle knowing he is struggling. A public high school can equip many young Christians to share the Gospel through challenges they may not get at a Christian high school. Public high school can also break a young person's faith and moral convictions.

7. You must consider these multiple factors as a whole. You must know your child well.

This is a great opportunity to pray together as a family, share Scripture, impart a vision, and put your lives into God's strong hands. Regardless of which school you ultimately choose, believe God will honor your prayers and work your choice to the good of your child.

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