

# Friday Focus

## From Emory

### *Wagging the Dog: Challenging the Backward Thinking of Parental Surrender*

*(Guest Article by Jonathan Nazigian and published in The Christian School Journal Blog)*

There is a reason we don't let 12 year-olds vote. There is a reason we don't let 15 year-olds join the army. There is a reason we don't let 13 year-olds drive.

Children are an incredible blessing from God, and we love them, but let's face it, they are not the pinnacle of sound judgment. Ask any parent who has seen that glazed, deer-in-the-headlights look staring back at them after they've asked, "What were you thinking?" and you'll know. There is a reason God did not say, "Let the child train himself up in the way he thinks he should go..."

Why? Because God, who created and designed us, knows we come into the world under the curse of sin. We are born in ignorance with our hearts bent toward rebellion. We are not, because of our sin nature, naturally prone to seek out God's best over our own selfish desires. Just like us, adolescents struggle with many things, but the difficulty of their struggle is compounded with a profound lack of maturity and an absence of real-world experience that helps put those struggles into a better perspective. A few things we know . . .

1. Adolescents have little idea who they are (their true identity).
2. Adolescents do not successfully delineate between what they want and what they truly need.
3. Adolescents have lots of energy but are flooded with hormones. Hormones do not make judgment clearer.
4. Adolescents often have dreams not based in reality.
5. Adolescents are perpetually ungrateful and think the grass is so much greener anywhere else but where they are at the time.

***And yet, even knowing all of this, many Christian parents will take the one parental decision that will have the greatest bearing on their child's future—the decision as to who, aside from them, will most shape the worldview of their impressionable, searching, and vulnerable children for 40+ hours every week—and hand that decision over to the child to make.***

As someone who has been involved in Christian Education as a student, a teacher, and an administrator for 33 years I have seen what used to be a rare occurrence grow into an astounding trend. Christian parents who leave the ultimate decision for their child's schooling in the hands of their child.

Some parents do this directly. "Jonny, where do you want to go to school next year?" Others do it indirectly; they cave in to their child's constant complaining, often directed at "the school" when, ultimately, the school is not the real issue, just the easiest target. Others, who want to move their children from the public school system into Christian school, take an approach that is sabotaged from the start, "Susie, let's just try Christian school for a few months, and if you don't like it, you can go back to public school."

***It seems the tail is wagging the dog.***

Where are the Christian parents who will make a decision in the best interest of their children and then fight for it, despite the external pressures and internal doubts that inevitably come? Where are the

Christian parents who will stand their ground and fight for their children's best future, even if it means fighting with their children in the short term? Where is the Christian parent who will sit down with their child, look them in the eye, and say,

...To the child who's being picked on...“Susie, I love you. And I know you do not like school right now. I know your friends are being mean, but just changing schools will not resolve the real issue. Mean girls are everywhere and you will face unkind people throughout your life. The best place to learn how to deal with them is in a school where the Biblical truths of peacemaking and reconciliation are taught.”

...To the child who has dreams of playing sports at the local public school...“Tommy, I love you. And I know you want to play football. But much more important in your life is your spiritual and academic future. I cannot sacrifice that for anything. I love you too much to put you under the influence of teachers, coaches, and friends who have other agendas and do not have your best interest in mind. We can explore township football, but when it comes to your schooling, Christian Education is a non-negotiable.”

...To the child who doesn't like the rules...“Mary, I love you. And I know you would prefer to wear other clothes and that you don't like some of the rules at school. But your true character and integrity aren't revealed by how well you obey rules you like. True character is revealed by how you respond to authorities and rules you don't like. No place is perfect, but your spiritual formation is not something I'm willing to sacrifice to a public school.”

...To the child whose friends are leaving for public school...“Eddie, I love you. And I know several of your friends might be leaving for public school. But God does not hold me responsible for the choices other parents make. God holds me accountable for you. And I know that Christian school is the best thing for you. And I also know what real faith means. It means that despite how it feels right now, choosing to be obedient and to live God's way will bring blessing, and that God probably has other and newer school friendships waiting for you.”

In the end, it all comes down to how we view what's most important in the battle for the hearts and minds of our children.

Some parents view Christian Education like Karate classes or swim lessons—a nice little “extra” in their child's life, so long as it is affordable and the child enjoys it. But if the finances get tough, or the child begins to complain, Christian school can be replaced with cheaper alternatives. Why pay so much for something my child doesn't seem to like?

I choose to view Christian Education like food or immunizations. These are necessities to my family. I don't care how much my children complain about having to eat balanced, healthy meals or the momentary prick of the doctor's needle; my decision is firm, and it is for their best interest. And I will take a third job, do without vacation, or sell my furniture before I place my child in the furnace of an educational system centered on humanism, relativism, and cultural idolatry.

You see, God did not call me to a life of comfort, free from struggle. God called me to train up my children in the most Biblical way possible and to give them every opportunity to turn their hearts toward Him.

I refuse to surrender in this war.