

## Toward an Enduring Partnership

Here we are not far from completion of the first decade of this relatively new millennium. How fast time flies, and what an awesome reminder of how little time we have as parents to accomplish what God has called us to do in the lives of our children. The brevity of life is clearly pictured in James 4:14: “You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (NIV).

So much to do in so little time. Understanding that very brief span, you have chosen Christian schooling, investing thousands of dollars each year to acquire for your most precious possession, your children—schooling that supports the spiritual and educational objectives of your family. Your choice is to be commended—for the price is high and most likely is being paid at the expense of satisfying other wants and desires.

Your decision has made you a partner, in the truest sense of the word, with your Christian school. This partnership is meant to assist you in that God-given responsibility of training your children “in the way [they] should go” (Proverbs 22:6). It’s a partnership that sometimes becomes extremely uncomfortable, as when you discover that your child is the subject of disciplinary action.

As long as I live, I will never forget the afternoon I asked one mother to come by my office. Her son had frequently been a genuine discipline challenge in our high school. As she sat nervously across the desk from me, I said, “I have something I would like to share with you about your son.”

Those words pushed her over the edge. Anticipating the absolute worst, she exploded from her chair. Shaking a finger in my face, she emotionally and tearfully blurted out, “You are the one who is going to be responsible for sending my son to hell!”

Her response indicated a deeply eroded and ineffective partnership. I had asked that distraught mother to stop by because I wanted to share a complimentary comment regarding some recent events and activities in her son’s school life. It turned out to be not quite the positive and pleasant experience I had anticipated. Even though we managed to bring the conference to an appropriate conclusion, it was a stark reminder of how delicate and often difficult it is to achieve the effective partnership we desire.

Over many years of being a Christian school administrator, dealing at times with difficult disciplinary issues, I have observed and experienced very positive parental support as well as responses like the one above. As is true in any partnership, each partner brings to the table assets that the other partner cannot bring. As parents, you bring a love for your own child that

is unique and distinct, a love that overcomes unbelievable obstacles and makes seemingly impossible sacrifices. Additionally, you know your own child as no other person does. By the same token, Christian school teachers and administrators bring to the partnership important understandings about education and youth culture and the dynamics of teaching and mentoring to develop a Christian mind.

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How can the partnership between the home and the school endure the tests of disciplinary action? I would urge you to “try on” these thoughts:

- My child’s side of the story is just that—her side.
- Scripture reminds us in Psalm 51:5 that our very nature, and this includes the nature of our children, is to sin.
- My attitude in approaching a teacher or an administrator has the potential of generating a mirrored attitude. If I approach in courtesy and kindness, I will probably engender a like response.
- To understand the situation, I must be willing to hear the rest of the story.
- I must be willing to support appropriate corrective action.
- As a partner, I am committed to ongoing productive communication with the school regarding my child’s behavior and the school’s expectations.
- I must resolve to present—with the school—a united front, eliminating my child’s natural propensity to pit me against my partner, the school.

So much to do in so little time. Let us so effectively implement our partnership, home and school, that all our loving and teaching—even when it is corrective and sometimes painful—will result in children who do “not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6).



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