

9. JESUS NEVER INSTITUTIONALIZED HIS TEACHINGS

School is a word that drips with Christian tradition. *Sunday School, parochial school, private school, church school, Christian school, Bible School—along with Christian College, Christian University, and Seminary*—are all forms of schools that are included in the institutions of Christianity. Many of the world’s great universities such as Harvard University, Notre Dame University, Brigham Young University, and Southern Methodist University are church-related institutions. They were once founded to train church leaders and missionaries and have been expanded over the years to compete with secular educational institutions.

The teacher-student relationship is certainly one of the two most crucial relationships mentioned by Christ and his students in the scriptures. (The other is the Father-Son relationship and all of the attendant relationships of the family that flow from it.) When Christ commissioned his own students as they went into the world, he told them that their main task was to *make students* among all the peoples of the world. He specified that this meant *teaching them everything that he had taught them*. Obviously Christ meant for his men to be involved in teaching and for his followers to be his students. But does this teacher-student relationship assume the founding of schools?

Though it might seem quite natural to connect schools with the roles of teachers, students, and the activity of teaching, it is just this sort of seemingly logical assumption that fuels so many well-intended but very human traditions. If Christ intended for schools to be formed then why didn’t he form a school? Would that have been possible in the first century? Were there schools at the time of Christ? Was Christ’s band of students actually a kind of school for that time and that culture?

Schools already had a long history at the time of Christ

Had Jesus wanted to found schools, it would have been easy to do. Jesus lived at a time in which schools had been common for hundreds of years. The Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews were all familiar with schools for children (usually only boys) as well as adults. They were not schools completely like ours. Most schools were private and were only attended by the children of the well-to-do, though there were sometimes exceptions to this rule.

The Greek schools exhibited considerable variety and had a centuries-long history before the birth of Christ. The variety resulted from the fact that there was no unified Greek country like there is today. The Greeks, instead, were spread around a broad area of the world and lived in cities (and the areas around them) which functioned much like mini-nations. Though there were similarities among them, there was also considerable social, economic, and cultural diversity. This led to educational approaches that catered to the needs of a particular city. Two famous examples of school-diversity among the Greeks are Sparta and Athens. The children of Sparta were given a stringent military training whereas Athenian youth were given a broader exposure to subjects that included not only physical training but also reading, writing, rhetoric, and literature. Both systems predate Christ by over four hundred years.

The Jews, on the other hand, had developed a training system for boys that revolved around the Rabbis. There was nothing in the scriptures that supported such a development. No Rabbis were legitimized by any writer of scripture. In fact, there are strong indications in the words of Christ to his own students that the rise of a rabbinic office or any authoritative teaching position was contrary to his own example. Jesus' instructions recorded in the entire chapter of Matthew 23 relate to this.

The problem of the Rabbi had escalated (happens often with human traditions) to the degree that Rabbis had begun to take over the teaching role of the family father and had even allowed themselves to be addressed as father. It should be noted that assumed authority usurps the authority of someone else. In both Jewish and Christian traditions it is the family father who ends up being shortchanged.

Today in various institutionalized churches the situation is very similar to the time of Christ. Leaders in many Catholic and Orthodox churches have assumed much authority and are often called father in recognition of the role they have taken over. The position of pastor in many Protestant or independent churches is very similar. It has also become an office of considerable authority and as a result it encroaches on the role of the family father by assuming "pastoral" or shepherding functions for children and families. This practice has become so common that not only do few pastors show any qualms about teaching other men's wives and families but it is understood as part of their job description.

The role of teaching

Jesus did not mean for the exercise of authority to be an attendant function of teaching. According to him, teachers are to help and serve but not to assume any authority; they are not supposed to take over nurturing roles in the family; they are not supposed to replace parents; they are not supposed to encroach on the roles of married men. What exactly is teaching supposed to be? This is an important question to ask because teaching is crucial in the scriptures.

In most areas of life, good teachers are individuals who have a brief influence in a person's life and then they essentially disappear. People who learn skills such as surgery, mechanics, flying, carpentry, cooking, writing, and most other occupations do not sit under their teachers for years and years as is so often the case in the context of traditional Christianity. Many people can't even remember the names of some of their most important teachers. The true effectiveness of a teacher is best measured by the speed with which the student no longer needs the teacher. The goal of teaching is to learn and the quicker it takes place the better. Then, when the student moves on, the teacher can teach someone else and the student can become a teacher.

The goal of religious teachers, however, is often the opposite. Any objective observer would think their purpose is to ensure the dependency of the students rather than help them become independent doers of what they have learned. Most priests and pastors appear perfectly content to continue "teaching" the same people for decades. This is not teaching in any normal sense and it is certainly not teaching in a scriptural sense. Neither Christ nor Paul kept their students around for years. They taught them and sent them just like any dedicated teacher would do. Most institutional church leaders, however, have no track record of following this principle.

The role of schools

Schools may initially seem to have more to recommend them than the kind of teaching that takes place in institutional churches. Schools exist somewhat apart from the religious activity of the churches, and school teachers fulfill a different role than do pastors or priests. They have their students for a limited period of time, and, overall, it would seem they do a much better job of training and teaching students. Is the school/teacher combination not at least somewhat similar to the teaching example of Christ with his students?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to differentiate between two very different school systems which exist in most societies. First of all, there are schools that prepare students to learn the general skills of reading and writing. These are the basics of all learning. It is principally through reading and writing that all other subjects are learned. This is why reading and writing are always the main thrust in the lower grades, in secondary schools, and even in the first years of college. Though it may seem that other subjects are taught as well, such as mathematics, geography, history, science, and social studies, the actual emphasis in all of these areas is to make students proficient in reading and writing the languages that are specific to each of these subjects.

What is meant by specific languages? In a sense, each subject area represents a language within a language. Though it is not generally recognized, each major language in the world is actually a conglomerate of many related languages, each with

its own rules and idiosyncrasies. For example, just because a person knows the alphabet and the basic grammar of English, it doesn't mean that person is automatically able to write mathematical formulas, recipes, numbers, temperatures, times, music notes, or maps.

Each of these is a sub-language within English with its own rules. Each needs to be learned separately. The same is true of sewing, typing, bookkeeping, business, finances, traffic rules, sports, charts, graphs, and dozens of other specific areas of knowledge that are read in a particular way. One doesn't "read" a map in the same way one reads a newspaper. Each of these has to be learned specifically and it takes years to do this.

Thus, reading and writing are much more demanding subjects than is normally recognized. They are the learning tasks that occupy the teachers and students in most schools for the first ten to fifteen years. Even the first years of college are usually dedicated to making sure students understand the prerequisites to the subjects they will be learning. These prerequisites have to do with acquiring the necessary vocabulary and concepts to be able to continue on in a subject area.

The difference between preparatory learning and advanced applications

It is only when reading and writing have been thoroughly learned in a particular area that students can continue learning a demanding occupation such as law, medicine, computer science, chemistry, physics, astronomy, engineering, aviation, etc. It's at this crucial point in the learning process—in the transfer from preparation to application—that young doctors begin treating people, that engineers begin to work on public constructions, that pilots begin to fly planes, that managers step into real organizational situations, that financial workers are given real responsibilities, that researchers are entrusted with the evaluation and preparation of real data, that teachers are entrusted with real students, that technicians are given tasks with consequences.

Though the places where these advanced students learn may sometimes have the appearance of schools, they are actually much more laboratories in which the skills of the subject are learned. The crucial difference is that these are teaching situations in which the learning is accelerated and the student is expected to transition from a place of dependency to full responsibility.

The teachers are different at this level. They basically accompany the students, demonstrate what they need to do, pass on the tools, watch them, and test their ability to do what they are supposed to have learned. Much of the learning takes place on site: during actual medical operations, in the cockpits of airplanes, on construction sites, in theaters, at refineries, in factories, and on the field wherever that might be. The

students who show initial success then enter their occupations and continue the process of learning on the job. It's only after a few years of honing their skills that most students then become proficient at what they do.

Jesus' students had already completed their preparatory schooling

When Jesus Christ began working with his students they had all been through the process of their basic education. They had occupations, they could read and write Greek and most likely Aramaic, and they had some source-level understanding of the scriptures. Jesus never had to teach them how to read and write. He was able to make reference to scriptural issues and details and expect them to know what he was talking about. Later he was able to send them forth as scribes and witnesses of his message.

Thus, when it is observed that Jesus never founded a school, it is not meant that he disapproved in any way of the kind of preparatory schools that teach reading and writing. What is meant is that he never founded an advanced applicational school such as our present-day graduate schools and such as the rabbinical schools of Shammai and Hillel which were available to students at the time of Christ in Jerusalem.

The schools of Christianity do not train competent readers of the scriptures

In traditional Christian education the learning process is quite different in both phases of learning. In the preparatory phase, the young "students" of traditional Christianity are seldom exposed to the languages and sub-languages of the writings of scripture. Instead, their schooling involves exposure to the traditional practices of whatever brand of Christianity they happen to belong to. In addition, they are taught to reverently defer to the religious authorities and to accept their pronouncements.

These religious authorities, in turn, are seldom skilled teachers in the sense that teachers in other fields are skilled, i.e. people who have learned the sources and are capable in the reading of the sources. Most traditional Christian school teachers have little or no understanding of scriptural sources. They themselves are dependent on what other authorities tell them. Even the priests and pastors in most churches have had little exposure to source-level information concerning the scriptures. Whatever they have been exposed to is most likely traditionally slanted. Catholic priests, for example, are mostly taught Latin. For centuries it has been the opinion of official Catholicism that Latin is a source language of the scriptures. (See p. 107 in Volume II.)

For students in institutional Christianity, translations of the scriptures in the form of a Holy Bible represent the only source text for their study of the scriptures. The great majority of students in Christian universities receive no training in the source languages (Greek, Hebrew) and those who do usually only attend introductory level courses.

(Call any seminary or Christian graduate school of your choice and see for yourself if this is not the case. Or simply ask any religious professional and hear what his or her experience has been.)

It is not unusual even in large churches to find no one among either the staff or the membership who has any skill in reading a source language of the scriptures. If it were ever said of a large institute of medicine, science, or research that no one in the institute knew the source language of the discipline, it would be considered ludicrous. In churches, however, it is commonplace. Such is the power of religious tradition.

The goals of religious educational institutions

The sources for most teachers of traditional Christianity are usually the institutional practices and traditional theologies which define the views of a particular church or denomination. In the schools of these institutions, the main goal is that the students learn the specifics of the beliefs and practices of the group they represent. Thus, Catholic schools produce Catholic priests and theologians, Methodist schools produce Methodist ministers and theologians. Mormon schools produce Mormon missionaries and teachers, etc. Were they to teach pure scriptural sources, it is out of the question that Catholics, Methodists, or Mormons would be the result.

The curriculums of these schools show a heavy emphasis on the traditional views and practices of each institution. There are some courses which may touch on actual sources such as Koine Greek or the cultural influences at the time of Christ, but they are usually not required and are few. The courses usually considered crucial in such church-related schools include Bible exegesis and exposition and the theology courses. These, of course, are not source-level subjects. To consider the Bible in any form as the source for the teachings of Christ is to miss the true scriptural sources by at least four hundred years.

The foundational teachings of most religious schools usually go back to some church founder who may have lived as many as fifteen hundred years or more after Christ. In many cases they are based on the teachings of men considered official spokesmen for their tradition who are alive today. In all of these traditional teachings, the actual teaching and examples of Christ take a distinct backseat to the traditional authorities whose commentary and interpretations are preferred.

The above observations demonstrate that the school question needs to be understood from various perspectives. First, schools can be of great benefit when it comes to learning the skills of reading and writing in the many different subject areas that make up the realities of the world. Secondly, schools in the formal sense are less practical for learning the mature skills of a profession or an occupation. The most effective means of learning at an advanced applicational level is for a student to spend hands-on

time with an experienced mentor. Third, the schools that serve institutional Christianity do not have the goal of primarily learning the scriptures, and their personnel is poorly equipped for mentoring men and women whose main purpose is to follow the words and examples of Christ. Instead, they major in passing on the distinctives of their supporting church institutions.

The example of Christ in relation to schools

Jesus Christ lived at a time and in an area of the world in which there were Greek schools, Roman schools, and Jewish schools. As already noted, two of the most famous Jewish Rabbis were both alive at the time of the birth of Christ. Jerusalem was a center of the opposing schools of both men. Hundred of students were there to study under them. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes (legal authorities concerning the Jewish Law) were other groups that utilized Jewish schools.

When considering the school question, it can be observed that Jesus and his students were all good examples of men who had learned the “language teaching” that takes place in schools for the young. They could all read and write; they were bilingual at the very least; they understood the basic cultural languages of their time. It should not be underestimated that all of the manuscripts we have that testify to the original Christian scriptures are written in Koine Greek. This means that the writers had some form of formal instruction in the writing of that language. We can assume that most of them learned their language skills in the home, on the street, and in whatever basic schools they might have attended. Christ never spoke against any of this kind of “schooling” and was no doubt schooled in this way himself.

It’s in the area of scriptural sources, however, that Christ clashed mightily with the students and the teachers of the schools and schools of thought of his time. Jesus confronted these groups and their schools. He did not seek to be legitimized by any of them; he did not join any of them; he did not seek the favor of any of them; he did not bow to the authority of any of them. He constantly contrasted the teachings of their authorities with those of the scriptures. For Christ, the scriptures were the chief authority and they were sufficient. It was also evident to all that Christ considered his own words to be the equivalent of scripture.

The problem with institutional Christian schools is that they seldom teach the reading and writing of scriptural sources and instead substitute their own traditional sources for them. The result is that the students do not establish roots in the scriptures but in human traditions. Though this is true, most students are under the impression that they are going back to sources. It is a deception that needs to be labeled as such.

Were religious schools to have a serious interest in their students learning the true sources of the teachings of Christ, then they would most certainly have courses that do

this and would also have courses designed to teach people how to recognize traditional influences and how to ferret them out of homes, schools, and the ecclesia. Such courses, however, are non-existent in the schools of institutionalized Christianity (though there are some aimed at exposing the traditional teachings of other rival institutions).

The point is that the study of the scriptures contextually and at the source level of the writings is not the purpose of a traditional Christian school. They have their own agendas and their own traditional sources that they propagate as did the Jews at the time of Christ.

Jesus and his students

Jesus Christ had a crucial message to pass on. It was the kind of information that required both explanation and demonstration. This is why one of Jesus' most important roles was that of a teacher and why one of his most important tasks was to find students who were willing and ready to learn from him. The resulting process—Jesus teaching, his students learning—was so important that it ultimately became the backdrop of much of the information in the Christian scriptures. When these writings portray Jesus, they almost always show him with his students. The scriptures emphasize his choice of students, his priority of spending time with those who were the most receptive, and his expectation that his students follow his example and go to make students of others.

It is the special nature of Jesus' message that makes it impossible to institutionalize it. To have relegated it to a school would have destroyed it. To have structured it into external behavioral standards would have smothered it. To have modeled it after any human undertaking would have doomed it. The only words that could describe it were initially chosen by Jesus. He spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven—a completely otherworldly designation—and then went on to speak of the king as a Father and the subjects as His children.

Jesus' message is inherently non-institutional. Instead, its core is intensely personal. It is so personal that it can only be compared to the family relationship. This is what it engenders and this is what Jesus demonstrated while with his students not only through his words but through his example and his commitment to them. Yes, he was their teacher, but he was much more than that. His teaching and his example went far beyond any institutional ties.

The role of teaching in the family

In addition to the example of Jesus with his students and Paul with his, there is another relational hotbed of teaching and learning in the scriptures: It is within the context of

the family. The family is foundational to everything ever written in the scriptures. Not only are the words *father, mother, son, daughter, brother, and sister* common throughout, but the very nature of God Himself is likened to that of family. It is well-known in the Christian scriptures that God is typically referred to as the Father and Christ as His Son. This referral to God as Father was always a source of agitation for the Jews. The Jewish scriptures, however, go even further in their elevation of the family by attributing to it the very nature of God Himself. They proclaim that when God set about to create an image of Himself that it required the creation not only of man but also of woman. The language used is very emphatic. *He created man in his own image, male and female He created them in His own image.* (Gen. 1:27)

Neither man alone nor woman alone can completely be images of God. Both were required. What does this say about the fact that there is only *one* God? It is interesting that the Hebrew word for one that is used to describe God is not the same word that was used when it said that Isaac had *one* son. In this latter case *one* meant that Isaac had a single son. The *one* that describes God, however, is the same used in Genesis 2:24 where it says about man and woman that the *two shall become one*. This is the way God is one. This is a different Hebrew word and has more the meaning of a unified whole or a unit. God chose the creation of a man and a woman who belong together to illustrate how He is. His basic character is that of family. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the Christian scriptures are a revelation of the “family” character of God.

God’s creation of man and woman to elucidate His own complex character, however, was never meant to be merely food for thought. Along with it was included the most shockingly practical proof of God’s oneness that man and woman could ever experience: babies! In children, fathers and mothers are given intense evidence of what it means for two to be one. And in this experience—this personal involvement in creating life—they gain an understanding of the character of the creator of the universe.

The scriptures demonstrate God using families as His chief tool in achieving His will and His purpose for all creation. This is why His greatest revelation of Himself is as a Father. He is not concerned about being a king, a CEO, a boss, an emperor, or a dictator. Christ called Him Father, and His will for individual men and women is that each would be born anew as His children.

This is why the *ecclesia of Christ* is also called the *household of God*. It is His family. The members are His children. People do not become members of the ecclesia of Christ by joining it like a club. There’s no entrance rite, no dues to pay, no letter of acceptance, and no official membership list. It is not an institution. It is a family. Entrance is by birth, just like in a family. Those in the ecclesia are God’s children; He is the Father; Christ is the first born; all are brothers and sisters among one another.

The roles men and women play in God's demonstration of Himself are not haphazard. Each is designed to highlight something of the complexity of God's own person and make clear His interrelationship with Himself. When one understands this, then all comparisons between men and women that would postulate possible advantages the one might have over the other become absurd. Each needs the other to complete the picture; each is crucial; each brings an aspect of the character of God to the table.

God designed men and women to uniquely demonstrate the dynamic realities of His own character. The roles men and women play in this demonstration are often complementary such as giving and receiving, leading and following, defending and depending, speaking and listening. Each role reflects something of the nature of God. Some have complained that the scriptures show men were given a dominant role, and that this is not fair towards women. Two things need to be said about this:

1) Concerning the choice: If God chose to demonstrate an independent-dependent aspect of His own nature, then His choice of how to do this is His own and those who protest are wagging a finger at God Himself. This is a case of the pot taking issue with the potter. Better to reconsider the logic of this than to speculate about the fairness of the roles.

2) Concerning the perceived *outworking* of God's design for the family: Unfortunately, much of what people perceive to be the Christian family is often nothing of the sort. Traditional caricatures abound. They have been particularly destructive with regard to the man-woman relationship and the family relationship. The fact is, many traditions of Christianity have done much to undo the priority of the family in the scriptures.

At least six traditional practices of Christianity deface God's designs for the family

1. The role of the institutional church leader.

When the institutional church institutes a hierarchical leadership, it automatically disenfranchises the family father in God's scheme of things. The family father becomes an authoritative nobody in the institutional church, because it's expected that he abdicate the authority for the teaching of his family to that of the church leader.

Some may think this is not necessarily the case in *their* church, but a closer examination will demonstrate that it is so. Though the father may be encouraged to teach the scriptures in his own home, he remains nevertheless under the guidance of the church leadership and he is expected to regularly bring his family to the church for teaching and instruction. The extreme result is that a family father regularly allows the husband of another woman to teach both his own wife and his own children.

The fact that this has become so common that seldom an eyelid is raised because of it, is indicative of the widespread acceptance of this thoroughly unscriptural practice. The result is that the home takes second place to the institutional church; the church leaders overtake the nurture of the family; the church leaders step into the role of the family father; the high position given the family father by God is undermined and replaced; the role of the scriptures is diminished in the home; the husband-wife relationship is weakened; the children are denied the scriptural role of the father; the father does not train himself for the important role of leader and teacher of the family; the father becomes passive and irresponsible; the wife looks to other men for guidance or takes over this role herself.

2. The role of the institutional church building

The institutional church is most recognizable by its sanctuary. For the superficial observer (and that is the majority), the sanctuary is the holy place where God expects His people to show up for worship services. There is usually an altar of sorts there and a holy man (a reverend or a priest) who is the leader. It is the Christian counterpart to the Jewish temple (or the Greek temple) and is often considered to be God's house. *Enter Ye into the House of the Lord* is the command emblazoned on a huge church building just off the LBJ Freeway in Dallas, Texas. Interestingly enough, the church building is built in the style of a classical Greek temple.

Countless sanctuaries dot the landscapes and neighborhoods of most Western nations. For the children in these countries they are the houses where God lives. Before entering they are told to be quiet; they observe how reverently people behave there; the service begins and they hear that they are in the presence of God; they see the stained glass windows; they observe images of Christ and the apostles around the sanctuary; they look at the altar and the big cross; they see how the people bow and sing and pray and repeat creeds; they observe ceremonious events.

The tradition of the sanctuary teaches people that they have to go to a consecrated place to really worship God. The result is that the home ceases to be a place where God is present. When children go in and out of the home they cease to be aware of the presence of God. Respect and honor are expected toward leaders in the sanctuary, but not of parents in the home. When a sanctuary is given holy status then it creates a vacuum of sanctity in the home.

3. The role of the marriage ceremony

The institution of the traditions of sacraments places unwarranted authority in the hands of church leaders. One of these sacraments is marriage. Its practice has created the impression that the only sexual unions that are truly marriage are those that are sanctified through the authority of a clergyman. The result is that many men and

women who are already sexually one with another man or woman are joined to yet another. Thus, the institutional church not only gives its blessing to adulterous relationships, but it encourages them.

Some have tried to argue that marriage is more than just a sexual union, but that is not true. Marriage is supposed to be a unique sexual union between one man and one woman. Of course, love and nurture and commitment are supposed to be a part of the relationship as well, but love, nurture, and commitment are by no means unique to a marriage. They should be characteristic of the life of any follower of Christ toward others. A marriage is distinguished by its sexual nature which makes it possible for new life to be created. A husband and a wife are allowed to share in the creative power of God.

The institutional church has contributed to the demise of the sanctity of marriage and to the demise of the sanctity of the sex act. In its place it has offered the sanctity of the marriage ceremony and the sanctity of the priest or the pastor performing the ceremony. Young people are taught by the church that only a sacramental marriage counts. Instead, they should be taught that they bear within themselves the gift of creating life and this is a gift that once given is meant to be accompanied by a life-long commitment to that new life. Unfortunately, sexual activity has become little more than a game in the Christian cultures and the sacrament of marriage only encourages and legitimizes it.

Adultery is a word that seems old fashioned. Unfortunately, it's become so common today that the word has long lost its substance. But adultery is a failing that the scripture writers took very seriously. It was inconceivable to them that a man with more than one wife could ever be a responsible man in the ecclesia. Christianity's churches often feign compliance with this limitation by defining married couples as those who are joined together through the sacrament of marriage.

Many who "walk the aisle," however, already have a sexual relationship with another person and in some cases even have children. The scriptures are very frank about the matter that a man is "one flesh" with a woman, and therefore married, not by walking the aisle with her, but by having sex with her. Marriage traditions make it easy for men and women to ignore previous relationships and even disregard children they have conceived.

4. The role of the wife/mother

It is common knowledge in the modern world that the scriptures do not support a feminist agenda. Though the scriptures proclaim an equality of men and women before God, they do not teach a sameness of men and women as to God's will for them. He has a separate plan for men and women corresponding to the way He created them.

The man's task corresponds to that of the Father. He is to exercise headship and love towards his wife and family. The woman's corresponds to that of the Son of God. She is to exercise obedience and love towards her husband and family.

In the minds of some, headship is a dominant role and submission is a subservient role. This, however, is by no means the perspective of the scriptures. They teach that both headship and submission are a part of the character of God. The one is not good nor the other bad. They are both indicative of who He is and how He is.

The scriptures are clear that the Father is the one who makes the plans; the Son is the one who carries them out. The Father commands; the Son obeys. There are things that only the Father knows; the Son defers to the Father in these matters.

Anyone claiming that the submissive role of the woman is demeaning, has to equally say that the role of Jesus Christ was and is demeaning. This is by no means, however, the opinion of Christ. He was obedient unto death and considered it a joy that was set before him. And the Father, in turn, gave him great glory and honor.

It is true that many women suffer under the cruel hands of tyrant husbands. The scriptures make no illusions about the fact that the great majority of people will not accept Christ and will not follow his words. Jesus offered his followers no hope for a perfect world. His will is something that all men and women will have to pursue and follow in the midst of injustice and intolerance. It was the way of the Savior and he made no bones about the fact that the student would never be greater than the teacher. If he suffered injustice, the same treatment should be expected by his followers.

5. The predominance of collective educational systems for children

It is not at all unusual for children who grow up in the homes of traditional Christianity to spend the great bulk of their time being taught and influenced by public or private educational institutions.

The point of this observation is not to say that all forms of group education are detrimental. The problem lies not so much in the practice of group instruction as in the predominance of it as a result of the almost complete absence of the father and mother in the process. The result is a relational imbalance of huge proportions with the big loser being the children. They grow up with loose ties to the family and with a fractured understanding of the importance of a father and mother. The real authorities in their lives are institutional figures and they pass this understanding on to the generation they raise with the same minimal effort and with the same dependence on institutional substitutes.

6. Tolerating the immodesty of men and women.

The scriptures attach sacredness to the marriage relationship and to the image of men and women. Their bodies are meant to be shared with one person and they are not to be flaunted or used inappropriately either in a show-off manner or in a tempting manner. Such behavior, however, is tolerated in much of Christianity. Husbands and wives are the ones who have the main task of representing the character of God to their families and to the world. They are the ones who are called to maintain the only true sanctuaries in the message of Christ: their own bodies.

One might be tempted to think that traditional Christian institutions have stressed the modesty of the sexes. Priests often dressed in black suits with full collars; monks wore long robes; nuns were often completely covered from head to foot. Even today these dress codes can be observed. Isn't this modesty?

Though such extreme attire may give the impression of moral consequence, the fact is that it calls inordinate attention to the supposed "saintliness" of the people involved. There is nothing in the scriptures that would indicate that Jesus or any of his students stood out in any way because of their attire. Their example is what modesty is all about. It is behavior that does not call inadvertent attention to itself. It does not seek the spotlight in any way.

Institutional Christianity weakens families

The father and the mother with their family in their home are not the center of the traditional church. Institutional Christianity moved its sanctity into a church building; it eliminated the head of the home as the highest role in the ecclesia and handed the job over to professional clergy; it took the teaching mandate of the father away and gave it to pastors, priests, and other teachers; it drove a wedge between the husband and wife by requiring families to leave their homes and go for instruction to authorized teachers in authorized locations; it removed responsibility from fathers and mothers and relegated them to be merely participants in their liturgies and celebrations.

The result is always weak homes, weak marriage relationships, and the worldly behavior of husbands and wives who do not see their families and their homes as the epicenter of what God is doing in the world. Instead, they've been led to believe that the institutional church is God's headquarters and that institutional church leaders are the ones who lead, manage, teach, and are at the vanguard.

Men who are recruited for these institutional leadership positions are put into roles that are incompatible with those of a family father. They often end up being placed into relationships and situations with other women that endanger their relationships with their own wives. The same is true of women who step into institutional roles of

leadership. They are thrust into situations and practices with men that are by no means intended for women.

Another relational powder keg is created when youth groups are formed and leaders are appointed to teach and guide these groups. Once again the priority of the family is violated and children grow up with traditional and mostly institutional understandings and have no idea of what the scriptures teach and have no experience of God's will for the family.

The family has to function in a hostile environment

Any individual who follows Jesus will be different from other people. This will also be true of any family members who follow Christ. The men and the women and the children will be very different from those who march to the other drums in the world. Should a family be fortunate enough to have both a husband and a wife who are serious students of Christ, then the husband will be the head of the home and love his wife as Jesus loved the ecclesia; the wife will be obedient to her husband and serve him with love; and the children will be growing in faith and will be obedient to their parents. The Christian scriptures will be the foundation of such a home and all the members will be students of those scriptures.

Such a family is the very heartbeat of the ecclesia of Jesus Christ. And only men who have been the heads of families like this are qualified to be one of the servant leaders of Christ's ecclesia.