

Parenting and Christian schooling

# nurture

**50 questions  
to ask your kids**

What shall we  
**remember?**

Students in the  
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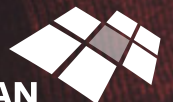
***Rest and play***

Trusting our  
boards and  
**why it matters**



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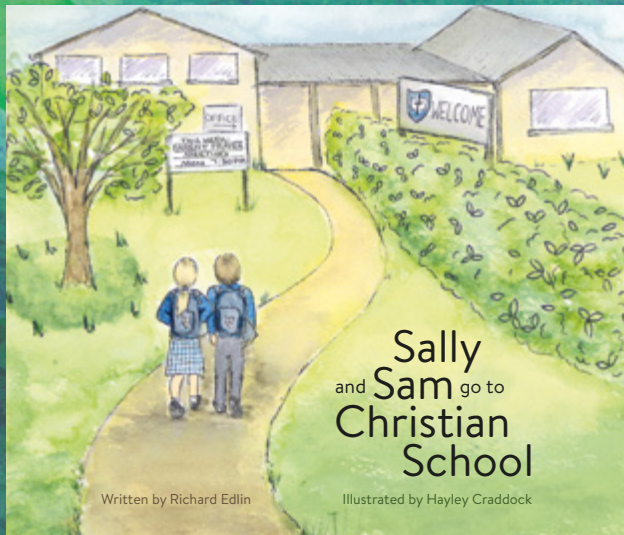
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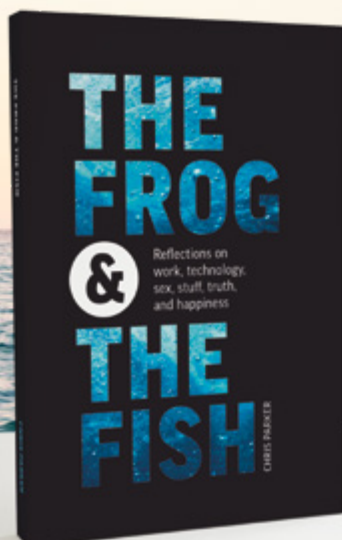
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# editorial

## Routines, rest, and remembering

NINA EDLIN

**Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God.**

Broken, busted, beyond repair is how many of the routines in our home are feeling at the moment. Even at work it feels this way. The 10am coffee run isn't even the same (don't worry there is still coffee!). In reality, things are probably not as broken as they seem. New routines or rhythms fill in for a while and hold us over. One routine that hasn't changed for us at the CEN National Office is our regular Wednesday morning staff meeting; a time for catching up but, most importantly, spending time in the Bible and in prayer together.

I'd love to share a passage we have spent time on (more than once!). We most regularly would read from a more traditional translation, however, in this case, we contrasted the NIV with *The Message*. In the message it reads:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (Rom 12:1-2)

Isn't it beautiful? We have been so encouraged and challenged, many times in various ways. I must say I don't feel particularly well-adjusted in these times, though I've certainly been drawn to fix my attention on God.

In Rachel McClure's article, "Remembering 2020", she reminds us of this same truth, the most important

'remembering' that will come out of this uncertain and difficult time, that our hope is in God. Jonno Simmons looks at the example set by God of proper rest and proper rest being part of God's good design for us; additionally, he asks how we are modelling this at the moment in our families.

Especially timely at the moment as we come towards graduation season, is the article from Sarah Strahon, "Students in the Public Square". Our schools have been busy preparing our children for life after school, life in the public square. As Sarah reflects on 1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" she raises the question, are they prepared to give an answer for their faith?

In this edition, we begin a collection of articles "Trusting Our Boards and Why It Matters" from Kathy Pereira, our governance co-ordinator. In this article, Kathy looks at what motivates people to get involved and join an association and its connection to excellent governance.

There is one other routine that hasn't changed for us at the office. Each Monday morning we have the joy of receiving specific updates from your schools, usually one or two schools at a time. We hear of things to praise God for and things to pray for. It is such a joy to share with you and your school in this way to remember you in prayer and to be able to pray more specifically for you. As you meander through this edition of *Nurture*, I pray you will be drawn to fix your eyes on God, that you might be changed from the inside out, for His glory!

Nina





# What shall we remember?

RACHEL MCCLURE



## We will remember that this time challenged our priorities, identity, and that our hope is in God.

I saw a social media meme the other day. It presented 2020 as a movie, screenplay by Stephen King, directed by Quentin Tarantino. That might be an exaggeration, but it would be fair to say that the year has gotten off to a shaky start. Our Emmaus Christian School community has been on edge since November, when the smoke started drifting across Canberra from fires in New South Wales and Victoria, triggering unprecedented air quality issues for the city. Then came our own fires, followed by a hailstorm so dramatic that, months later, some are still waiting for replacement vehicles and home repairs. Coronavirus and its flow-on effects are the current challenge.

Teachers, students, and parents found their respective roles in education changed almost overnight. Technology took a front row seat. Parents, students, and teachers, in a sink-or-swim situation, swam. However, the stresses have been felt in all segments of our school community. We know that difficult and stressful times do not last forever and we look forward to the lifting of restrictions.

We have been reflecting on what we will remember from this time.

In Deuteronomy, “remember” was a constant refrain. Remember what God did for you, remember what you learned. In Judges, we read too often of the times when God’s people forgot. The Old Testament contains many examples of God’s people building an altar of rocks, or keeping a feast from year-to-year, in order to remember what God had done. Remembering is, in this sense, a deliberate action. It would be easy to drift into calmer waters at the end of this current storm and simply forget.

So, what is it that God would have our school remember from this time?

We will remember that this time challenged our priorities. As individuals, we are prone to distraction. Our sport, shops, travel, coffee shops, restaurants, cinemas, and gyms were taken away. Some could not even access workplaces. The world actually felt a little bit slower for a while. I hope we will remember the priorities we rediscovered—time with God, time with our families, time to think—as life tries to return to its usual speed. I hope our priorities will include the things that we desperately missed—time with our church friends or colleagues. In a school context, so many of the things with which we fill our calendars have been removed: assemblies, excursions, camps, carnivals, interschool sports, amongst others. Soon, we will be able to reinstate events. Will we take the time to think through why we do what we do? What is valuable and what is merely habitual? Which events enhance our mission to be a Christ-centred, worldview-shaping school and which ones pull us in other directions?

We will remember that this virus challenged our identity. Emmaus is a place that values community and seeks to develop a caring relationship with each family as a reflection of who God calls us to be as Christians. We welcome families, not just students. To exclude adults from our campus, shut the playground, and conduct parent induction courses via Zoom has been painful for us. We have had to find new ways to connect—every parent is greeted, albeit in their cars, and each student is met at the gate and welcomed by name. It has allowed us to get to know our new students more quickly, and to help more anxious students transition from parents to the school day more effectively.

When restrictions are behind us, we will keep this morning greeting because it has proved valuable to reinforcing our identity as a school that cares about community.

We will remember, and this is perhaps the most important remembering that will come out of this uncertain and difficult time, that our hope is in God. This time of fire, hail, and pandemic has exposed our idols for how powerless they really are. Science has provided no solution to either the virus or the loneliness that came with isolation. Excellent financial planning has been hard hit by the economic effects of coronavirus. Those who put their hope in family have been separated from each other. Health, wealth, and youth have provided little security. It is our privilege as Christian teachers in a Christian school to be able to point our students and families to the source of our hope, God Himself, who is in the process of restoring His creation.

Fire, hail, coronavirus, political unrest: it seems as though the past few months have lasted an age. Perhaps they have not lasted long enough for us to make permanent changes to our lives. Will we simply drift back to business as usual, back to old routines, without seizing the opportunity to ask why we do what we do? I hope, instead, that we remember to regularly re-examine our priorities, to continue to find ways of building Christian community in our school, and to point our students and families toward a sure and certain hope in Christ.

Rachel is head of primary at Emmaus Christian School, Canberra. She worked with CEN NSW in 2018 and returned to Emmaus in 2019. Her passion is to equip students with both a robust Christian worldview and an excellent academic education. Rachel loves music, reading, knitting, and playing with her grandchildren.



# Students in the Public Square

Equipping students for life after school

SARAH STRAHORN

I have thought a lot about my 18-year-old self and also the 18-year-old version of the students we send out from our schools. So often, as schools, we tout the line that we are “equipping students for life after school”. It is noble. And all of our schools are honest in our pursuit of this. We prepare students over many years so they are equipped with knowledge and skills; equipped in their understanding of the world and how it works; equipped for the HSC or equivalent; equipped for university; equipped for a trade; equipped to share the world with people; the equipping goes on. These things equip towards a working life and a decent life. They are good. And all schools should be endeavouring to achieve such things.

And yet what are we, as Christian schools, doing to equip our students, that the school down the road is not? “See the world through God’s eyes” I hear you say. Yes! We are striving to equip our students to view all they do, encounter, and learn about, through a deeply grounded framework of who God is knowing that in Him all things hold together, including their own lives. We strive to equip them for a life of deep truth with firm foundations. It is wonderful and is a privilege that should never get old.

I am a product of Christian schooling and can testify to the above. I also had the privilege of a home that honoured God. I had a solid relationship with Jesus when I left school. In essence, I had an incredible foundation which has stood me in good stead. And yet ...

In hindsight, I would have benefitted from some intentional discussion and argument; some training around apologetics before I launched. No, not learning to apologise, although I had plenty of practise and understanding of that concept, and still do! But I often think how helpful it would have been to grapple with apologetics, which simply put, is (reasons for) the defence of my faith. I was rock-solid secure in my personal belief of God’s existence and love, but I was not as prepared as I could have been to engage and overtly own my faith well in the public square that university was about to thrust me into.

We know not what life is going to look like in terms of freedom of religion and faith in the coming years. And it feels that the prevailing winds are increasingly intimidating if not hostile, yet also deceptively compelling.

How wonderful to be sending out young people from our schools who not only privately own their faith but also, in a dignified way, are able to publicly own and engage in discussion and debate about faith and the prevailing winds with discernment, reason, and truth. How wonderful to release students who have confidence to take their place in the public square, hold their nerve, make sense, and bring a voice of hope to those also swirling in the eddying waters of opinion and thought.

Perhaps you are connected to a Christian school that is doing intentional work in this space. I salute you. One thing I know is that preparing our Christian young people in this way, is a worthy contributor when “equipping students for life after





school". And truly, it could also be the catalyst for some of our students coming to a saving faith because of the assurance and reason they discover.

I have been encouraged recently that it is the Holy Spirit who emboldens us, irrespective of personality. How gracious and reassuring. Read Acts for some inspiration on that topic. What a privilege to partner with the Holy Spirit by doing our part in equipping young people to be ready to give an answer, trusting Him to give them wisdom and courage.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15

While it is wonderful for schools to grapple in this space, we are at our best when school and home partner. Parents be encouraged that robust and deep conversations with your children are worth it. Some of my fondest memories are of hours spent as a family around our dining table at the farm, discussing current issues. It continues even now as adults, with the next generation joining in. It never ceases to amaze me how kids of all ages are capable of thinking deeply through topics and want to talk about them. Why not engage our kids and their thinking around strong reasons for faith!

If your thoughts have been provoked, my hope for this article has been achieved. If you are encouraged in what you are already doing, I am glad. And if you are looking for something to

How wonderful to release students who have confidence to take their place in the public square, hold their nerve, make sense, and bring a voice of hope to those also swirling in the eddying waters of opinion and thought.

further your understanding in this area of apologetics, once you've done *Nurture* cover to cover, can I recommend the YouTube videos of Ravi Zacharias; one of the most influential and gracious Christian apologists of our time.

These are the thoughts of a pilgrim, well past her 18-year-old-self, thinking about the up-and-coming 18-year-olds leaving school on her watch.

Sarah is currently a deputy principal at Heritage Christian School. She is a country girl living by the sea, and thinks anything is worth doing as long as it involves people. Her tip for a good day: a good run, a good coffee, and a good laugh. Her tip for a great day: unwavering trust in a good God whether the other three things work out or not!





# Trusting our boards and *why it matters*

Why should you have confidence in your school's governance?

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Families whose experience of schooling is largely in public schools or schools that are what we called systemic, e.g., Catholic schools, have very little direct connection with the people who make the broad decisions about why the school exists. In some ways, this can lull families into inaction—schools are like they are because that's how it's always been done. And also, it can be hard to see the link between governance and what happens on a day-to-day basis in each school. (Unless, of course, something goes badly wrong!). We know there are people in the system office who look after the regulatory matters and set the core principles of education that the school follows.



CEN schools were established by families who believed that it is the parents' responsibility to oversee the whole-person education of their children. So when our schools began, they were established as independent schools with boards who were responsible for ensuring the vision, mission, and values of the school were set clearly in place. These boards were also responsible, under law, to meet the requirements of running an effective school.

This model continues today.

At times, any governance model can seem a little remote and as parents, we sometimes ask ourselves:

- Who are these board people and what do they actually really do?
- Why can't we just have the principal and school—do we really need this extra layer of leadership?

Your CEN board is absolutely vital for the well-being of your school. Their focus is different but complementary to that of the school principal and leadership team who focus on the outworking of your school's vision in the day-to-day operations of the school. The two—governance and operations—work together to ensure that your school is the best it can be.

The board is elected by members and is responsible for (among other things):

- ensuring continuity of the school's vision from one leadership to the next
- recruiting the principal/leadership of the school
- ensuring the school meets compliance with all government laws
- receiving and responding to all reports, including financial reports
- overseeing strategic planning and managing risk.

Your CEN school simply could not exist without the faithful voluntary service of parents, carers, and significant others to your board. Your board represents you. It provides an opportunity for parents to significantly speak into the vision for all who send their children to your school. This is not about one person's particular interests. Your board becomes a group who represent and serve the corporate interests of the whole community. To give you some idea as to why people put their hands up for a role such as this and what motivates them, we are sharing with you a transcript of an interview entitled "Every Square Inch" with Wayne and Vivienne Speirs from Kuyper Christian School (Wayne is the current board chair at Kuyper).

### "Every Square Inch"

**Wayne Speirs** *Abraham Kuyper's quote "every square inch" speaks to me in that God created us to be in relationship with Him and He created the world for us to enjoy. So, our response should be to consider God in everything we do, say, and touch.*

*That raises the question of how do we serve God in the lives that we live?*

*How do we include God in the conversations we have with others and how do we treat the world that He created for us?*

**Vivienne Speirs** *Every square inch makes me think of Jesus' sovereignty in every thought, action, and plan. So at Kuyper, the way the children are taught, the way they act, and the way they interact with each other, and the way they represent the school speaks of Jesus. And, shows that every square inch is His.*

**Wayne** *Our children go to school 6 hours a day, 5 days a week for approximately 40 weeks a year. That's a huge impact that staff and teachers at a school have on our children at an age where they are developing their foundational beliefs on who they are and the life they should be living. It was important to Vivienne and I that the adults—the teachers and the staff who supervise and teach our children during these formative years—share the same beliefs and faith that Vivienne and I share and have the same desire for our kids to grow: to know God and to trust in Him in their lives.*

**Vivienne** *When we chose Kuyper Christian School it was because of the referral of a friend. Neither of us had really had experience of Christian education, and we felt that having teachers who love Jesus and put Him first as well as teaching our children academically would be the best foundation for our kids.*

**Wayne** *Teachers at Kuyper really care for our students. This shows through in the respectful and caring relationship they develop with our students and the acknowledgement that we are created by God and should strive to do the best and live the best life we can for Him—not just for ourselves but to serve God and the community in which we live.*

**Vivienne** *The teachers at Kuyper, they motivate our children by the one-on-one care they give. Something I've noted to other people is that the children are individually looked after and the programs are adjusted to suit them. Sometimes kids are very busy and need a bit more. Sometimes they need a bit of extra care and time to slow down the program and so the programs are adjusted. Children at Kuyper are taught to serve, honour, obey, and to think.*

*So, after our children have finished through all the grades at our school, they are highly educated exceptional thinkers with a Christian worldview.*

We hope this interview has given you a glimpse of what motivates one family to become deeply engaged in the life of the school. Thank you, Wayne and Vivienne, for your willingness to share this and especially for your faithful commitment to Kuyper Christian School and beyond.

If this has inspired you to find out a bit more about your school board or governance of Christian schools, contact your board chairperson or the CEN governance coordinator, Kathy Pereira: [kathy.pereira@cen.edu.au](mailto:kathy.pereira@cen.edu.au)

Kathy is passionate about our CEN schools thriving! She has worked as a teacher and executive staff member of CEN schools and has been state executive officer for NSW/ACT during which time the vital role of supporting associations, boards, and school leadership became a focus. Kathy has an MEd through the National Institute and is also an affiliate (Cert) of the Governance Institute of Australia.



# REST AND PLAY

During the last few months, I have been reminded of the importance of rest and play.

JONNO SIMMONS

If you are anything like me, you do not need to be reminded of the importance of rest. I know I need to take some 'down time' or have time to 'clear the head', time to have everything quiet, or time just to be. The physiological research supports this too. Research speaks of the power of rest to clear your head by removing adrenaline and cortisol (chemicals the body produces when under stress or duress) from the system before it becomes neurotoxic and robs us of clear thinking, good decisions, and sleep. Research also speaks of the power of sleep to refresh the brain. Did you know it is mostly in the deepest of sleep that serotonin and melatonin, the chemicals responsible for feeling content and happy, are replenished?

Unfortunately, the conversation is all too familiar though. "You need to make time to rest," implores the caring friend. "Sure, I would love to. When?!?" retorts the overwhelmed me. And so, the ugly cycle begins. I am too busy to rest, so I am too busy to replenish, so I do not sleep well, so I do not make good decisions, so I do not rest ... You get the picture.

Work is an unavoidable part of life though—the Good Book says that when we were put here one of our purposes was to work (Genesis 1:26-31 amongst others). If we keep reading (a fair way actually—maybe just jump to Exodus 31), we see that when God tells the Israelites to work, He also tells them to rest. He actually includes it as one of the Ten Commandments. Typical to God's character, it is a rule for our best, not to make life harder, but so we can live well. Rather than going so far forward, if you just go a little further in Genesis you see God set this example of rest. He worked. He created. He rested (Genesis 2:2-3). Surely if God does, we should?

In Exodus 31 God speaks to the Israelites about building the temple for Him, and He actually says to stop building this once a week, every week, and rest. He shows the Israelites that they need to take the time to rest in order to remember how good God is, how holy He is, and how He is the one who cares for us. It is not our work, it is not what we do for Him, it is not even the sacrifices we make, it is actually simply God who does this for us and He recognises that we need to take some time to rest to remember this.

Author, Jefferson Bethke, argues that we need to implement daily, weekly, monthly, and annual habits of rest for ourselves

and for our families, where we take time to remember who God is, and therefore who we are and why we do what we do. Without these deliberate moments of rest, in order to care for those around us, meet the deadlines, or maintain the image, we often find ourselves losing focus and becoming people we do not want to be, and modelling a lifestyle to our children that is quite removed from that which God wants for us.

With ritual, non-negotiable, locked-into-the-calendar habits of rest I make time to restore my sense of identity, purpose, and hope for my body, mind, and soul. I actually like what a mentor of mine says. He argues that we must find time to rest and then time to play!

I have witnessed many of our community and close friends go through some post-COVID difficult moments. We have been in a significantly stressful time, indeed a crisis, which required significant input from so many and we are not through it yet. However, we are seeing a way out. It is natural that we are stressed, carrying extra loads, and just plain tired. What becomes critical then, is that we make time for us and our families to replenish. We need to deliberately establish habits that lead to restoration and follow our Creator's lead to rest and be reminded of His glory and His love for us.

So, what do you need to do? Do you need to wake up a little earlier for some solitude or go home a little earlier once next week? Do you need to reset technology parameters for you and your family or do you need to book that holiday? Do you need to implement a new daily, weekly, monthly, and annual habit of rest? How are you protecting your time in God's Word? How are you modelling to your children God's desire for us to rest in Him? Do they even notice?

Choose rest. Choose play. Choose God's example.

Jonathon is a passionate disciple of Jesus and educator who desires to see the truth and potential of Christian Education truly influence the future of Australia's educational landscape. He is a family man with 3 boys, and loves enjoying the spoils of the NSW's north coast as he serves Jesus at Richmond Christian College. "We must be amazingly faithful so we can be faithfully amazing in all we do."







We need to deliberately establish habits that lead to restoration and follow our Creator's lead to rest.

# a few things...



## #beheadstrong

What does it mean to be REAL in our faith alongside being honest about our mental well-being? Headstrong is an online space for young people where faith, mental well-being, and real life meet. We can't wait to get the conversation started. [beheadstrong.uk](http://beheadstrong.uk)

## The Chosen

*The Chosen* is the first-ever multi-season TV show about the life of Jesus. Created outside of the Hollywood system, *The Chosen* allows us to see Him through the eyes of those who knew Him. No matter where you are at in your journey with Jesus Christ, this TV show is for you. Available on YouTube and most streaming platforms.



## MYTHBUSTERS

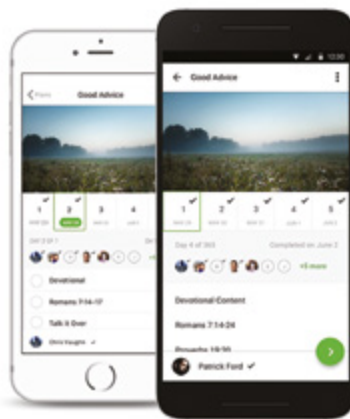


### Myth #3 *The Religious Discrimination Bill creates the right to be a bigot*

This is simply untrue. This law will not create a right to be a bigot it does not license speech that is malicious and which incites violence or hatred. Existing laws already give employers, regulators, and qualifying bodies the power to require responsible and civil communication in their roles as employees and professionals and the Religious Discrimination Bill will not change this.

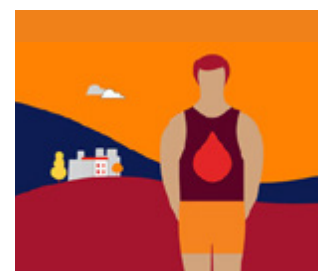
A pluralist democracy which values free speech shouldn't use the law to shut down moderately expressed views that we disagree with or find offensive.

[aacs.net.au](http://aacs.net.au)



## The Bible App by YouVersion

These days we are connecting in many different ways. One way you may like to explore is by reading the Bible via a reading plan simultaneously with your friends. Once you have the app, simply choose a reading plan, invite you friend/s, and complete the day's reading when convenient. There is room to comment as you share together and encourage each other to spend time in God's Word.



## DONATE BLOOD

Giving blood is one of the most generous things you can do for another person. And, Australia needs 31,000 blood donations every week. Donating blood is an essential act of care-giving. That means it's exempt from any restrictions on your movement or curfews! Please book a donation at your closest donor centre. [donateblood.com.au](http://donateblood.com.au)





## #EndCovidForAll

It's not over until it's over for everyone. COVID-19 has shown the vulnerability of us all. And while in Australia some states have entered a new phase of easing of restrictions, thousands across the world are struggling under the weight of this virus. As the Church, we are called to stand with the most vulnerable, to raise our voice, to ensure our empathy and compassion extends beyond our walls.



## With All Due Respect Podcast

**Less agro, more conversation.**

Is it even possible to have a deep discussion without it descending into chaos? Michael Jensen and Megan Powell du Toit think yes, and want to show the rest of us how to do it.

There's plenty of things they disagree on: free will, feminism, where you should send your kids to school, and what type of church you should go to. But there are also plenty of other things that they have in common. They want to talk about all these things with conviction. They also want the conversation to be constructive. Tune in to find out if that's possible.

## Operation Christmas Child

Operation Christmas Child is a hands-on way for you to

bless children in need across the world by filling shoeboxes with toys, hygiene items, school supplies, and fun gifts. We collect the boxes and distribute them in the name of Jesus Christ to children living in vulnerable situations. To find out more visit

[samaritanspurse.org.au](http://samaritanspurse.org.au)



## Caring for the Souls of Children

Coming alongside struggling children can feel like an uphill battle. Yet children struggle with the same desires adults struggle with, are lured by the same lies adults fall prey to, and can find hope in the same source adults can find hope—in Jesus. This book helps you share Christ—the way, the truth, and the life—while tailoring interactions and teachings to the understanding of children.

Topics addressed include a wide variety of general and specific issues that children face including anxiety, anger, abuse, suicidal thoughts and actions, self-harm, shame, grief, disability, disease, sexual identity, and many others.

[reformers.com.au](http://reformers.com.au)

## WORLD WATCH

World Watch is a current events program produced by Christian journalists, that keeps kids up-to-date on what's happening in the world through highly engaging and biblically sound 10-minute videos. The subscription-based program helps young people understand today's news through headlines, news briefs, and feature stories, and develops a child's critical thinking skills and discernment. [worldwatch.news](http://worldwatch.news)





# Studying With NICE

From library shelf to transformed self.

How has moving from a textbook to Google Maps represented my journey as a Christian teacher? If I was to say it was because of NICE, I think an explanation would be needed.

ALI COFFEY



NICE, or the National Institute for Christian Education, provides postgraduate training that seeks to equip and educate Christian professionals working in and amongst Christian school communities, whether they be in teaching, administration, or leadership. After seven and a half years of part-time study, last year I completed my Master of Education (woo hoo!).

Mount Evelyn Christian School (MECS) is a strong supporter of staff receiving training and support: in particular, the education that NICE provides. All MECS staff are required to take the first three subjects, or foundation units, of a Graduate Diploma with NICE in the first five years of their employment. These units are: "Introduction to Christian Education", "Biblical Foundations", and "Worldviews in Education". Each of these hold a lens up to the way we see our own profession, our faith, and our role in school and seek to realign us with a biblically-grounded and Christ-centred approach to our thinking. It is the desire that teachers would be willing to continue their studies afterwards to gain the full Graduate Diploma, then on to a Masters, or (for those that are keen) a PhD.

The title of this article was also that of my final assignment which had me reflect on my years of study with NICE. Furthermore, I created the accompanying artwork to represent this transformational journey because gradually over time, after many assignments and a great deal of faith-shaping encounters in my life and profession, what I learnt through NICE evolved.

Having schooled, trained, and worked in the UK state school system before MECS, I knew very little about Christian education and, like everyone, I came with assumptions about what it should look like. However, under the veneer of Christian principles, my model looked no different to the secular state system I'd come from and I was simply being a, "Christian educating" in a, "Christianity-enhanced public school brand of education" (Hull, 2003, p. 204). As my studies got underway in the foundational units, I saw the knowledge I gained as being left on my library shelf, like specialist textbooks that I'd refer to occasionally. In hindsight, this revealed my dualistic understanding of Christian education as separated into the sacred and the secular. I was living out of a narrative that was superficially God-centred and that, although I believed I was portraying the Christian aspects of my role, I was instead teaching my students that God can be compartmentalised. Furthermore, my (mis)understanding of Scripture and its authority meant that my knowledge of God's story was fragmented. As Thompson (2014) warns, I saw the Bible as, "a collection of 'bits' ... 'answers' ... a sourcebook of 'values' [which] led to large portions of scripture remaining unused, designated irrelevant" (p. 5).

The next stage in my development found me reflecting on the way each completed unit was transforming my thinking and teaching; I began to understand my knowledge as lenses through which I could see the world. Often referred to as a worldview—which is a framework or story from which we see, understand, and interact with everything around us—I was beginning to see my Christian lenses take shape. Sire (2004) describes these as, "fundamental orientation[s] of the heart ... expressed as a story or a set of presuppositions" (p. 122), and there were equal shares of positive and challenging impacts on my faith and pedagogy. On the one hand, in light of, "all things hold[ing] together, in Christ" (Col 1:17), I could help my students see that all learning areas revealed God's desire in creation, the distortion of sin, and

the redemptive work of the gospel in Jesus. However, my new lenses also (painfully) uncovered my underlying view of students as empty vessels awaiting me, the teacher, to fill them with knowledge. Influenced by Greek philosophy of Plato prevalent in today's society, my worldview, as Smith (2009) describes, reduced students to being, "cognitive machines" (p. 29).

Having become a father of four children (over seven years, rather than instantaneously!) and navigating my increasing leadership roles within the school, I became aware that wearing the Christian worldview lenses made me a passive observer rather than a proactive engager. I therefore wanted to begin to identify, connect, and adopt practices that adhered to a biblically-grounded worldview of life and education: both as a teacher and now as a Christian parent. This I symbolised as a map for it involved planning routes (e.g., pedagogical practices and curriculum), discovering new ground in God's creation, and better understanding the overall picture: which is God's overarching story told in Scripture.

And now? That static map of knowledge is an ever-updating and dynamic Google Maps where new routes, points of information, and a community of users is always in my hand. In reflecting upon the journey of my postgraduate studies with NICE, I consider the transformation that has taken place. From providing Christian texts and ideas that could populate my library shelf, to forming my very Christian identity, I have not taken for granted the significance of these studies. I have learnt also that a dynamic and humbled approach to my day-to-day is required. In Ephesians 4, Paul talks of putting away our old ways of doing things, which have been shaped by deceitful or worldly influences. Instead, we are to, "be made new in the attitude of [our] minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:23-24). This is not a one-time action, as if getting a master's degree will make me a fully graduated 'Christian teacher'. Instead, the putting on of a new self is a daily action that comes not from leaning on my own understanding, but drawing upon the infinite wisdom of God, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). I am humbled to know lots, and yet still very little, about being a Christian educator as God continues to transform me through my profession.

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Ali is a teacher at Mount Evelyn Christian School (MECS) in Victoria. MECS has a commitment to support their staff through their studies with the National Institute. The National Institute is a postgraduate training institute for the cause of Christian education, it's key focus is to help school teachers like Ali to develop in their capacity to educate from a biblical perspective.



# 50 questions to ask your kids

*Engage your child in conversation no matter their age.*



## Preschool

- 1** If you could be an animal for one day, what animal would you be?
- 2** What makes you happy?
- 3** If you had to give everyone in the family new names, what would they be?
- 4** What is your favourite Bible story? What do you like about it?
- 5** What is the funniest face you can make?
- 6** You're outside for a whole day, what would you do?
- 7** Who is your friend?
- 8** What do you think is the coolest thing God ever made?
- 9** What are you really good at?
- 10** What do you want to be when you grow up?
- 11** What is something you are especially thankful to Jesus for right now?



## Lower Primary

- 12** If you had one superpower, what would it be?
- 13** Who is your favourite Disney princess or superhero and why?
- 14** If your pets and/or stuffed animals could talk, what would they say?
- 15** Are you a good friend?
- 16** What is your favourite book?
- 17** You're outside for a whole day, what would you do?
- 18** If you wrote a book, what would it be about? Who would the characters be?
- 19** How do you show people you care?
- 20** What are some of your favourite things that God created in nature?
- 21** How did you see someone showing kindness to another person today?
- 22** What do you think Heaven is like?
- 23** What do you like best about your brother or sister?
- 24** How would people know you follow Jesus today without you having to tell them?
- 25** Who is your favourite Bible character?

*After a long day at school instead of asking, "How was your day?" try these conversation starters with your kids.*



## Upper Primary

- 26** What three items would you grab if your house was on fire?
- 27** If you could meet anyone from history, who would you want to meet?
- 28** What is the funniest joke you've ever heard?
- 29** Is there anything you really want to talk about that we haven't discussed?
- 30** What are three words you would use to describe yourself?
- 31** What is something that you would look forward to?
- 32** When do you feel most proud of who you are?
- 33** If you could invent something, what would it be? What would your invention do?
- 34** Have you been a good friend today?
- 35** If you had a thousand dollars to help someone, what would you do?
- 36** When you are praying, how do you picture God?
- 37** What is your dream holiday?



## High School

- 38** What do you daydream about?
- 39** What do you think you are good at?
- 40** Was there anyone you struggled to love? Why?
- 41** Which holiday have you enjoyed the most?
- 42** If you joined the circus, what circus act would you be?
- 43** What do you think university/TAFE would be like?
- 44** If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
- 45** What do you feel your friends are learning from you?
- 46** What is your favourite family tradition?
- 47** If you had to live in another country for a year, which country would it be and why?
- 48** If you were prime minister, what would you do first?
- 49** What is the most important thing you've learned from the Bible?
- 50** If you could ask God one question right now, what would it be?





Checking in on your family, friends, schools, and colleagues during 2020 and the various stages of lockdown or restrictions is so important.

# Supporting each other in 2020

## 1. But first, pray

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul urges the church; “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour”. There is such an endless amount of ways you can be praying, and from this passage, we begin to see a few avenues to explore. We also see that the aim is that we may live lives “in all godliness and holiness” that please our Lord.

## 2. Drop a text

Send an email or a text to those who are partnering with you at school. Let them know how you are praying for them. Let them know of your appreciation or concerns. Ask if there is any way you can support them. Clear communication in times of confusion always is better than assumptions.



## 3. Everyone in their place

If you are disappointed with the support you have been able to give or the support you have received this year, recognise that the people around you—at school, at work, at church, wherever you go—are flawed humans like yourself. Be careful about what expectations you place upon them at this time. Only God is good, only God is perfectly just, and only God is able to perfectly comfort and know our needs.

## 4. Check in

If someone doesn't feel ready or is unable to meet face-to-face, picking up the phone, having a video call, starting a group chat, or messaging someone on social media lets them know you are there to talk and ready to listen.

## 5. Listen and reflect

This will be a challenging time for our mental health and well-being, whether you have a mental health problem or not. If someone opens up, remember that you don't need to fix things or offer advice. Often just listening, and showing you take them seriously, can help someone to manage.

## 6. Ask questions

Ask how people are managing, and ask again if you're worried they aren't sharing the full picture. Asking again, with interest, can help someone to open up and explore what they're feeling. Ask how you can pray, so that you may be more intentional in your petitions.

# CEO spot

## Another story

MICHELLE DEMPSEY  
CEO, CEN

I have been so humbled, blessed and encouraged by the wonderful reports coming from our schools.

We already know that we will look back in history at 2020 being a year of massive disruption and hardship on people across the world. The economy and businesses (including your favourite coffee shop) have all experienced great stress during this time. I'm guessing you have countless stories, perhaps including your own, of the impact of COVID-19 on the world.

However, there is also another story that has been emerging, one of hope and trust in Jesus and is full of joy and celebration. And, this story is flowing from our Christian schools! I have been so humbled, blessed, and encouraged by the wonderful reports coming from our schools. Here are some examples from during lockdown and face-to-face:

- Teachers have delivered packs personally to eager little students and waved through windows. One school hand delivered beanies for a cold winter. Our teachers care!
- Bus drivers have morphed into delivery drivers during lockdown. Our schools are resourceful!
- Principals have supplied staff meeting packs full of treats for hardworking teachers during staff meetings online. Our principals are hospitable!
- Teachers have done some hilarious online and pre-recorded musical numbers that have probably become YouTube sensations. One from Calvin Christian School would have to be one of my favorites as it's right out of the 80s! Our teachers are creative! [facebook.com/calvinchristianschooltasmania](https://www.facebook.com/calvinchristianschooltasmania)
- Plenty of innovations in teaching and learning have been explored and trialled. Teachers have grappled with how to bring a Christian perspective into their online and face-to-face lessons. Our teachers are distinctive!
- Executive teams have provided thought-provoking online devotions and reflections for their teams, many of which have been heartfelt and Spirit lead. Our teachers follow the Lord Jesus!
- Schools have actively looked out for those who have struggled in this time—either by emotional support or the easing of financial burdens in regards to school fees. Our schools are merciful!

During this time, CEN staff have not been able to visit schools as readily as they were able to before. I personally have been grounded in Victoria for what feels like way too long and I'm itching to get into communities and taste and smell the good work that God is doing. I have such admiration for the teaching staff in our communities and in particular the leaders who have had to navigate a puzzle that simply doesn't have a finished picture.

Can I encourage you as parents, grandparents, and friends to think about doing something special for the leaders or the staff in your local Christian school? Why not bake a cake, or organise a local bakery to drop off some muffins, or send some flowers, or just send an email of encouragement or a card? Let's get creative and express our admiration, love, and support.



Cheers, Michelle  
*Michelle*





DEVOTION

## CORE VALUE 5

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### **Ongoing Christian teacher development underpins quality Christian education**

DR BETH BEECH

#### **REFLECTION**

The purpose of an education that is biblically grounded is to disciple students, through formation and transformation, into a holistic understanding of God, His creation, and His created beings. This is done through a recognition that all truth, in all subject areas, belongs to Him and has been created for His purposes. This involves the transformation of the worldview assumptions of teachers such that they may teach from a biblical perspective and not based on the assumptions promoted by the secular humanism of our society.

The teaching and learning of all true curriculum content, including the hidden curriculum, therefore takes on a theological intent as each subject is seen in its context of God's grand narrative of creation and human history.

Christ is the sovereign Lord and ruler of all things, including all things in the sphere of education. The restorative task of Christian teachers is to seek to demonstrate to students His Lordship in all facets of schooling and life. This requires continual training and academic rigor in order to be able to critically evaluate curriculum and pedagogies as teachers work with God towards the filling of the earth with the knowledge of His glory while encouraging students to do likewise.

#### **PRAYER**

Lord, help us to become more aware of the impact our teaching has on transforming the worldview assumptions of our students. May we not be satisfied to merely 'bring' your Word to class as if we are somehow integrating the truth that you already own!

Our desire is to model a biblical understanding that all knowledge comes from you and, as such, may we go beyond excellence in our pedagogy and curriculum development to faithfulness to your purposes for it.

Help us to live out, before our students, a commitment to ongoing professional development for the fulfilment of your purposes, and faithfulness to you in all of life's circumstances.

Amen.

*For the earth will be filled with  
the knowledge of the glory of the  
Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

Habakkuk 2:14 (NIV)

*The Son is the image of the  
invisible God, the firstborn over  
all creation.*

*For in him all things were  
created: things in heaven and  
on earth, visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or powers or  
rulers or authorities; all things  
have been created through him  
and for him.*

*He is before all things, and in him  
all things hold together. And he is  
the head of the body, the church;  
he is the beginning and the  
firstborn from among the dead,  
so that in everything he might  
have the supremacy.*

*For God was pleased to have all  
his fullness dwell in him, and  
through him to reconcile to  
himself all things, whether things  
on earth or things in heaven, by  
making peace through his blood,  
shed on the cross.*

Colossians 1:15–20 (NIV)

Excerpt from *Reflections on a Solid Foundation*.





DEVOTION

## CORE VALUE 6

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### **A Christian worldview shapes the entire curriculum in our schools**

CHRIS PARKER

#### **REFLECTION**

The purpose of schooling is, in part, to draw our children into a journey of understanding of the world that God has made—the world in which they live. Christian education seeks to invite students to recognise and rejoice in the goodness of this world, develop discernment towards the distortions and disobedience of the world, and all the while inspiring them to participate in God’s big plan of redemption and restoration of the whole cosmos through His son, Jesus. Learning in Christian education is more wide and deep than mere understanding of a curriculum.

This deeper learning about the world acknowledges the two ways that the New Testament speaks about the world. The first is the physical creation with the cultural potential that God has woven in. The second is the ‘world’ as a dark spiritual realm that is not of God and is constantly in a tug-of-war with the good essence of creation. This ‘world’ is typified by patterns, arguments, and philosophies (worldviews) that whisper and coerce humans away from the beauty of the full creation and the good news of God’s plans (in Christ).

Christian education unfolds a worldview that is shaped by God’s good news for His people and place. It seeks to demolish ‘worldly’ arguments and patterns and to protect students from being taken captive in their hearts *and minds* by “hollow and deceptive philosophy”. Therefore in the Christian school, the Christian worldview shapes the entire curriculum.

#### **PRAYER**

As parents and as school leaders, we acknowledge that we don’t want to be shaped by the patterns of this world—and we accept that we need your help to be transformed into a people of your good, perfect, and pleasing will. Please protect us from hollow and deceptive philosophies and in our task as parents we ask that you would help us through your spirit to take captive every thought to make it obedient to your son Jesus.

We ask, Father, that you would work through us to make our schools places where students view the entire curriculum through the beautiful, expansive, intellectually-rich worldview that is informed and shaped by your revelation to us in the Word.

Amen.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will..*  
Romans 12:1–2 (NIV)

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*  
1 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*  
Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

# Memory verse

“

But in your hearts revere  
Christ as Lord. Always be  
prepared to give an answer  
to everyone who asks you to  
give the reason for the hope  
that you have. But do this  
with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 3:15

”



# Lego challenge

*Build something that  
depicts a scene from  
your favourite Old  
Testament Bible story.  
We would love to see  
your pictures!*

# PRIMARY STUDENTS CREATIVE WRITING POETRY COMPETITION TIME TRAVEL



Write a poem about travelling  
to a different time and meeting  
a courageous Christian

Entries close Fri 25 Sept 2020  
[enquiries@aacs.net.au](mailto:enquiries@aacs.net.au)

@AustralianAssociationofChristianSchools

# SECONDARY STUDENTS CREATIVE WRITING ESSAY COMPETITION INVENTING SOLUTIONS



Write a creative essay of  
800+ words that discusses  
the development and  
function of an amazing  
invention to fix a current  
world problem

Entries close Fri 25 Sept 2020  
[enquiries@aacs.net.au](mailto:enquiries@aacs.net.au)

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