

ASSOCIATION FOR  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION INC.  
Operating Rehoboth Christian College



# Rehoboth Distinctives

Series  
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Rehoboth C

# REHOBOTH DISTINCTIVES

## PART ONE

### **Not all schools are the same.**

**Even among Christian schools, there are differences. This series of articles aims to look at some of the distinctives behind our particular school community.**

The dominant motivation for the founders of Rehoboth to take the huge step of starting a Christian school was the idea of God's **covenant relationship** with Christians and their children.

Let's look at what we mean by **the Covenant of Grace**. It will be helpful to look up the Bible references provided.

Because we believe that God has made a covenant (*partnership commitment*) with his people (see Genesis 17) and that his covenants are everlasting (Psalm 105:8-10) and still applicable to us as New Testament Christians (Acts 2:39, Galatians 3:29), our children are special children (1 Corinthians 7:14) and we still have a special responsibility to train them to love God and to see him as the beginning of all wisdom (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 22:6).

In his covenant God promises to be our God and we will be his people, and he extends these promises to the children of believers.

Christian parents therefore need to raise their children to know and love God, leading them to faith and conversion by instruction, prayer and the example of Christian living. The task of the Christian home is enormously important! The responsibilities that we have before God as Christian parents are awesome!

To nurture our children to love and obey God and see him behind all things (Colossians 1:16-18) is not easy. We want our children to learn to see life from a Christian perspective. We want them to develop Christian character. We want them to respond in love and service to Jesus Christ.

Parents who take these things seriously find that the Christian school can be a great help in shaping Christian minds and lives. As the slogan on our new signs says, Rehoboth is about '*serving Christian families with Christ-centred schooling*'.

**It is a community of Christian families working together to help each other obediently carry out the covenant responsibilities they have to bring up their children to respond to God in every area of life by providing schooling that is Christ-centred.**

## PART TWO

**This series continues by considering some *implications* of the Covenant of Grace as an important idea behind Rehoboth.**

The last article pointed out that '*Rehoboth is a community of Christian families working together to help each other obediently carry out the covenant responsibilities they have to bring up their children to respond to God in every area of life by providing schooling which is Christ-centred.*'

**One implication of this is the school's enrolment policy.**

The reason for this school existing is primarily to assist *Christian* parents in the Christian nurture of their children. We see the school as being *an extension of the Christian home*. Rehoboth is not a school for children who do not come from Christian homes. Rehoboth does not exist primarily as an evangelical organization to bring the gospel to those who do not otherwise hear it. In itself, that makes Rehoboth quite different from most Christian schools who have a more 'open' enrolment policy and allow a certain percentage of enrolments from children who do not come from Christian homes. I am certain that we could have a much larger student population if we had a different enrolment policy, but we would also have a very different type of school.

**The idea of the Covenant of Grace also affects the way we should view the children in our Christian school.**

We should see the children of Christian parents also as members of God's covenant community, *still growing in an understanding of God and perhaps often very inconsistent in their response to God*. At Rehoboth we would view our students as citizens of God's Kingdom, needing Christian nurture. They are children who have God's covenant claims on them and they need to be reminded often of this. They either accept God's claims, or they turn their back on him. These children need to surrender to Christ and to commit all their life to God. *The school views this growing knowledge of God and response to him as an integral part of the total educative process*. It is not just a matter of looking at the child as being either 'saved' or 'unsaved'. Rehoboth aims not so much to lead children to a point of commitment to Christ (which is more properly the important role of the home and church), but to teach children who have been dedicated to Christ to live their lives obediently, consistently, competently and joyfully in service to God in everything they do. The school aims to take their Christian commitment further so that they grow in their ability to think and live as real and significant Christians who are ready to make a difference in this world!

# PART THREE

**The first two articles considered the Covenant of Grace and looked at some implications.**

**The other major distinctive area of thought which is foundational to the existence of Rehoboth Christian School is the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.**

The Sovereignty of God means that **God is King**. We believe that he wants us to **acknowledge his kingship over every part of life**. Abraham Kuyper, an important Christian thinker, theologian and politician put it this way, *“there is not an inch in the entire area of human life which Christ, who is sovereign of all, does not call ‘Mine!’”*.

God does not want to be Lord only of certain parts of our lives. He wants to be a total God, touching every part of our being. So we can't just say that our Christianity only affects our salvation and our devotional life and what we do on Sundays. As Christians we can't just cut ourselves off from the evil world and live in isolated little spiritual huddles. We can't just wrap ourselves, or our children, in nice safe spiritual cotton wool and avoid the ugliness of a broken world needing reconciliation to God. We can't just take the attitude that God's kingdom is only about what will happen after Jesus comes again.

Our faith should also affect such things as our career goals and financial choices, our attitudes to politics and justice, the TV programs we look at, the way we raise our families, what we think about aboriginal reconciliation and environmental issues and sexuality and popular culture and so on... The Bible should not only guide the moral choices we make. **We need to develop Christian perspectives and world views which keep God as king in the centre of all our thinking - and we need to help our children to do so also.**

We can't make a distinction between some areas of life which are 'religious' and some which are 'secular'. Being a Christian means that we know that God wants to have the supremacy in everything (see Colossians 1: 15 -20 / Colossians 2:8 / Colossians 3: 23). It's all or nothing!

Our children also need to be taught to think Christianly if anything is to make sense to them. The Christian home, church and school need to shape minds which become attuned to 'taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (see 2 Corinthians 10:4,5).

**It is because we believe that God is sovereign, that we know that all the different areas of learning and life are *not* senseless and disjointed. God demands that in education we train children to see this whole world as his. He wants us to give him the glory in all things (Soli Deo Gloria), putting him on the throne in every area of endeavour.**

# PART FOUR

**The last article considered the Sovereignty of God.  
This article looks at some implications  
in terms of curriculum choices.**

Let me ask you a question first of all :

***Is there any question which your child might  
ask you that you would refuse to answer?***

What if your child asked what AIDS was, or why people abort unborn babies, or pollute the environment or what cancer is, or why some people get divorced? We might feel overwhelmed, but would we remain silent? Would we say that as Christians we should not even think about these things but should focus instead only on what is pure and noble and good (see Philippians 4:8)?

Most of us would probably say we would try to respond, but would also qualify it by saying that the type of answer and amount of detail would depend on the age and maturity of the child. We would not respond to a six year old the way we would to a sixteen year old. We would make decisions about what was appropriate and exercise discernment. We would try to relate our answer to a wider view of what life is all about and the values and Christian beliefs we have (ie our world and life view). We would probably also admit that on many of these issues we might need to seek input from other people or resources to help us out.

If we believe that God made and upholds everything and that even though sin affects all of life, *“there is not an inch in the entire area of human life which Christ, who is sovereign of all, does not call ‘Mine!’”* (see the last article), then we must agree that we can't cut our children off from reality and only expose them to some parts of life. Because God is sovereign, we want our children to learn to think Christianly about all things under his rule - even those things which make us very uncomfortable or where the affects of sin are very obvious.

Therefore in the Christian school also we will not avoid discussion of nuclear war or diseases or relationship conflicts or political greed and so on. Our curriculum will not just try to be 'sanctified cotton wool' which avoids anything ugly and tries to keep our children in a naïve state of ignorance. The child's innocence should not be violated by an 'in-your-face' confrontation with issues beyond his or maturity and readiness, but neither should the child's need to be nurtured to competent and knowledgeable maturity in all things be neglected. The task of teaching our children Christianly in the home, the church and the school is one which needs great wisdom and prayer! Thank God that we can support each other in these things and have the support of Christian schools as we nurture our children to know that our God is King of all!

## PART FIVE

An important Bible passage which helps us understand Christian education is  
**Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.**

**The passage connects some of the ideas about parental responsibility, the role of the home, the need for pervasive and repeated Biblical direction and the fact that God wants a total response.**

In this passage God has just given his laws to his people to help them enjoy life to the fullest. He gave them directions how to enjoy their God and to bring him glory and how to be happy. It's all very positive! God passes on a key to life and then tells parents how to pass on that key to their children.

God says that we should *impress* these truths about him on our children by talking about them when we sit at home, when we walk along the road, when we lie down and when we get up. God says to bind them as symbols on our hands and bind them to our foreheads and to write them on our doors and gates. **In other words, God is saying that *all* of our thinking and doing and coming and going should be touched by awareness and response to him.**

We need to get this across to our children. It's not an option to dangle in front of them, it's something we are told to *impress* on them. **We need to immerse our children in God's truths and perspectives in *all* areas of life.** God wants us to point our children to him through *all* of our common activities so that thoughts of God and his guidelines to love him and enjoy life in turn shape *all* of their thoughts and actions.

That's what Christian education is. It's something that is meant to be total and natural. It is meant to be 'taught' and 'caught'. God doesn't tell the Jews just to teach the Torah in the synagogue on certain days of the week. He doesn't say just to talk about God at certain designated times of the day. No, it's meant to be 'total' and *permeating all of life*. **We can't just say that the education our children receive at school each day isn't part of shaping their total minds.**

Why should we do this? Because 'the Lord our God, the Lord is *one*'. He doesn't want us to share our allegiances with anyone else. He hates the thought of us wasting ourselves searching for the meaning of life anywhere else but in him. He knows that all things hold together in him alone and urges us to impress these things on our children so that they also share the riches of his covenant promises.

What a wonderful thing that we can work together to set up Christian schools which can help us carry out that vision and mandate!

See also the article, *Christian Education - What is it?*

by Rob Geijsman, July 1994. Available from the school office.

# PART SIX

Everybody has a **WORLD VIEW**.

**Our world view is determined by what we consider to be our basic beliefs and values.**

Questions such as *Why am I here? Is there a purpose in human history? Is there a God? and What is important to me?* all combine to determine our world view.

Even documents such as the state Curriculum Framework document (1998) acknowledge that *'people's values influence their behaviour and give meaning and purpose to their lives'* (page 16) and *'each person should be equipped with the tools to critically examine WORLD-VIEWS (both religious and non-religious), especially those dominant in his or her background and school community'* (point 1.7 of Values section).

In fact, our world views not only 'give purpose to our lives', they determine **how we make meaning out of information and knowledge**. Our world view determines how we combine everything we observe and learn into some framework by which we can try to make sense of life and our place in the scheme of things. We will reach different conclusions based on the presuppositions we hold.

As Christians we are to be *'transformed by the renewing of our mind'* (Romans 12:2) taking *'captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ'* (2 Corinthians 10:5) and ensuring that our thinking acknowledges that Christ is *'head over every power and authority'* (Colossians 2:10). We are called to develop a Christian view of this world and our lives, putting on *Christ-coloured spectacles* (John Calvin's term). **Such thinking is to be foundational to what is taught to God's covenant children at home and in the Christian school.**

A useful framework to provide a structure for a Christian world view is

**CREATION - FALL - REDEMPTION.**

These three Biblical themes should distinctively shape our view of life and our thinking about curriculum in schools.

\* When we consider **CREATION** we consider how God created things to be in their perfect state and ask questions such as *Where am I? and Who am I? and How does God intend life to be?*

\* When we consider the **FALL** we look at how **SIN** has misdirected what God created and distorted God's good structure and how this now determines how we see things.

\* When we consider **REDEMPTION** we look at the remedy and Christ's redeeming of his whole creation (see Romans 8: 19-22).

*The next article will continue the discussion of this model.*

# PART SEVEN

The last article introduced the framework of

## CREATION - FALL - REDEMPTION

as a way of structuring our world view, and hence as a *model* for considering how we think about curriculum.

The world we study and live in and relate to is one which God created with **structure**. Albert Wolters, in his book ***Creation Regained - A Transforming View of the World*** (IVP, 1986) tells us that **structure** refers to the fact that everything is God-created, and thereby has a particular nature or structure, 'after its own kind'.

As well as considering the **structure** of all things, we should also consider **direction**. Direction refers to the fact that creation is **misdirected** because of the fall into sin, or **redirected** to serve God through the redemption of God's people in Christ.

God created all things with purpose and structure and for his glory. Sin threw everything out of balance, and we live in a world where we must acknowledge both the structure of the creation and the effect of sin in misdirecting things. As Christians we don't just leave things there however. Just as we ourselves are redeemed, so we now work towards the redeeming of creation for Christ. Think of some other words that express something about our redemption (restoration, reconciliation, renewal, renovation, re-creation, reclamation, reformation, regeneration) and our task becomes clearer. **The whole point of redemption is to restore the creation to obedience to God, for his glory!**

Wolters quotes Bavinck's definition of the Christian faith:

**"God the Father has reconciled his created but fallen world through the death of his Son, and renews it into a Kingdom of God by his Spirit."**

This helps to explain the distinctiveness of a reformational world view. The central insight that '**grace restores nature**' (ie 'created reality') should clarify **three fundamental dimensions** for us

- **the original good creation**
- **the perversion of that creation through sin**
- **the restoration of that creation in Christ**

These three themes should be fundamental to the way we as Christians look at our world and the approaches to learning about this world that we adopt in educating our children.

(Consider also the following parts of scripture in this regard :  
Genesis 3 / Psalm 19: 1-4 / Psalm 147: 15-20 / Romans 8: 18-25 /  
Romans 12: 1,2 / 2 Corinthians 4: 3-18 / 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21 /  
2 Corinthians 10: 1-5 / Colossians 1: 15 - 2:8)



# PART EIGHT

## Thinking about Discipline in the Christian School :

Prospective parents who visit Rehoboth often ask the principals about discipline. Sometimes what they are asking is, "How strict is the school? What punishments apply and why?"

**I usually reply that one of the ways in which the Christian school is distinctive is the way in which discipline is viewed.**

The word **discipline** looks very much like **discipling** and that is an important starting point in our thinking. **Discipline is first of all about making disciples, not about punishment.** We need to be careful that we don't get *discipline* and *punishment* confused in our minds.

As Christian parents and as a Christian school, our vision for our children is that *'as covenant community members, though living in a sinful world, they develop to maturity and are conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ.'*

(extract from the Association's Vision and Mission Statement).

Our discipline of our children (in the Christian home and in the Christian school) should include all the **constructive measures** we can draw on to guide, train, educate, instruct and encourage our children to be mature disciples of Jesus. It is all very positive. It is something which is done *for* the children, not *to* them. It is about discipleship and developing Christ-like character.

Discipline as such includes such things as words of praise, gestures of encouragement, speaking honestly about our faith, teaching God's truths, celebrating God's goodness, providing security and affirmation, giving assistance and guidelines to grow and further develop gifts and skills, and much more. It is so much broader and more positive than just thinking about the **corrective measures** (or rather the discouragement of un-Christ-like behaviour) which are also necessary at times.

Harro van Brummelen in his book, ***Walking with God in the Classroom***, puts it this way :

*"The purpose of discipline is to disciple students in the Lord's way. It addresses the future, while punishment only looks back. Discipline is an opportunity to redirect students: to strive against sin and to overcome weakness, to build inner peace and righteousness, to partake in the holiness of God. Through discipline students must realise the grace of God. Discipline must not be harsh retribution. It may not cause bitterness from perceived lack of grace and forgiveness."*

## PART NINE

The last article considered the link between *discipline* and *discipling*. It is about much more than rules and punishments.

### Let's look at a few more important ideas regarding discipline in the Christian home and school :

Discipline also needs to involve *grace*. God does not deal with us as our sins deserve, and we also need to be gracious in our dealing with each other. Modelling grace to each other is important to appreciate God's grace to us. Yes, we need to train young people to be accountable but we also need to show we are not legalistic. We need to remember that God is both just and yet also gracious without these two sides of God's nature contradicting each other! We particularly need to exercise grace and mercy when there is repentance. Therefore, sometimes discipline is not always consistent. That may sound strange, but think of the way that we as parents discipline our children. Do we treat each of our children in exactly the same way in regard to discipline?

A desired goal of discipline is for children to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Students need to be encouraged to live in community, sensitive to the needs of others and willing to serve others. Therefore they also need to be encouraged to develop their own internal restraints on behaviour - i.e. self-discipline. Being well behaved is not merely a matter of obeying a set of rules but derives from **a personal discernment of what is appropriate and Christ-like behaviour**.

We all need to learn to think more consciously about what we do and why we do it, and then realise that **choices have consequences**. Sometimes those consequences need to be corrective and involve the discouragement of un-Christ-like behaviour. There may be a *punishment or retribution* of some kind and the nature of this may vary from child to child and depending on the age and maturity of the child. Sometimes *restitution* needs to be made (eg the broken window needs to be paid for), or *reconciliation* (a relationship needs to be restored and healed), or *rebuke* and *reprimand*. We need to point out why something was wrong and clarify what is required. Sometimes this involves *counsel* and *instruction*. We also need to encourage *repentance* (seeking forgiveness from each other and God) and a genuine turning around in thought and actions.

## PART TEN

### Let's sum up with a quick review of some of the important distinctives of our school :

- Rehoboth exists because a **community of Christians** takes God's **covenant promises** to them and their children seriously and wants to **faithfully** work with other Christian parents to **nurture** their children to love and serve God in **all areas of life**, in **obedience** to their covenant promises as parents to God.
- Rehoboth exists because we believe that **church, home and school need to work together** in harmony to provide integrity and consistency in the way our children are taught to **understand God, his word and his world** and their purpose and task.
- Rehoboth exists because parents want their children to **acknowledge the sovereignty of God in all things** and to be prepared to competently and knowledgeably carry out their role for the Kingdom of God, serving God as Lord over every part of their lives.
- Rehoboth exists because parents take the **Bible as God's infallible truth** and know that it needs to touch all of our teaching and learning.
- Rehoboth exists because **Jesus said he is *the Way, the Truth and the Life*** and therefore we are **committed** to our children being educated in a school which communicates that consistently at the heart of what it believes and does - even if that requires much hard work and sacrifice.
- Rehoboth exists because God requires us to be **renewed in our minds** and thinking to be **conformed to Christ**, rather than be conformed to a world which ignores God. We know that our children need to be trained to 'think with the mind of Christ' to **apply Christian thinking intensively** to everything they know and do.
- Rehoboth exists because we believe that a person's **purpose in life is to glorify and enjoy God forever**. We want to train our children, through their school education as well as their home and church, to give God the glory in all things (the school motto :Soli Deo Gloria - **to God alone be the glory**).
- Rehoboth exists because we believe that **Christian schooling is not just a product we buy** in a commercial, consumer oriented world, but a fundamental way in which we, as parents, can corporately be obedient and faithful to God in the way we raise *his* children, for his service.