

Christian Education

A comprehensive exploration of the theological foundations, historical development, and practical application of Christian education in the contemporary church. This presentation examines how the church fulfills its teaching vocation while equipping believers for ministry and life transformation.



The Educational Imperative in Scripture

Biblical Foundation

Education appears throughout Scripture as a central theme, from Genesis to Revelation. The word appears explicitly in 2 Timothy 3:16, translated as "instruction" or "education" from the Greek *paideia*.

The biblical mandate for education encompasses:

- Teaching God's commands (Deuteronomy 4:6)
- Preserving knowledge (Ezra 7:10)
- Transmitting faith across generations (Psalm 78)
- Making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20)



The Epistemology of Christian Education

Creation

God created humanity perfect and complete, with potential to live in harmony with the Creator (Genesis 1:26-31)

The Fall

Sin corrupted human intellect, emotions, and capacity to know God, creating the need for redemptive education

Restoration

Education serves to humanize fallen humanity and restore relationship with God through Christ

Christian education addresses the fundamental human condition: we are created in God's image yet fallen, requiring intentional formation to fulfill our created purpose.



Human Perfection and the Cultural Commission

When God created humanity, He established a governmental system for Eden with clear components: duties (cultivate and guard), rights (eat freely), restrictions (avoid the tree of knowledge), and consequences (death for disobedience).

This constitution extended beyond Eden to sustainable planetary development. Humanity serves as "sub-creator," given the cultural mandate to name animals, develop language, and exercise dominion as God's regents.

Though the Fall subverted the completely good results of the cultural mandate, it did not change the mandate itself. We remain called to be sub-creators of culture under Christ's lordship.

The Birth of Educational Need



From Perfection to Corruption

After 430 years of Egyptian servitude, the "truth" of Egypt became truth for the Hebrews. The nomadic tribe of Israel needed a superstructure—religious, philosophical, juridical, and political ideologies—to maintain cohesion and distinction.

Education became essential not for information alone, but for formation of identity, preservation from idolatry, and restoration of relationship with God.

Education as Culture and Superstructure

01

Teachers

Those responsible for transmission
(Deuteronomy 6:2,6)

02

Students

Learners who construct knowledge
(Deuteronomy 6:7)

03

Content

What must be taught (Deuteronomy 6:1,5,13-17)

04

Objectives

Desired outcomes and transformation (Deuteronomy 6:1-3)

05

Methodology

How teaching occurs (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

These five essential elements of education appear clearly in God's prescription through Moses, establishing a pattern that endures throughout Scripture.



Educational Approaches Through History

Since ancient civilizations—Mesopotamian, Chinese, Greek—educational discussions have been central to human development. Great philosophers devoted time and attention to education because it is indispensable for growth, development, and construction of ideals like peace, freedom, and social justice.

The Reformation prioritized education, with Luther and Calvin founding state-supported schools. Protestant churches of the late 19th century established schools alongside churches, recognizing education's vital role beyond Sunday school alone.

Traditional Educational Approach

Characteristics

- Focus on transmission from teacher to student
- Privileges the specialist and models
- Views adult as "finished" and child as "miniature adult"
- Teaching centered exclusively on professor
- Student executes prescribed tasks from external authorities

Philosophical Foundation

Students are passive receptors until filled with necessary information, which they can then repeat to others. Knowledge acquisition occurs through external information provision, independent of student interest or will.

Behaviorist Educational Approach



Characterized by primacy of the object (empiricism), this approach sees knowledge as direct result of experience. It emphasizes reward, control, and careful planning of learning contingencies while manipulating reinforcements and despising non-observable elements underlying behavior.

Schools function as control agencies, adopting peculiar forms of control according to behaviors they intend to install and maintain, conserving patterns of behavior accepted as useful and desirable for society.

Humanistic Educational Approach

Rogers and Neill

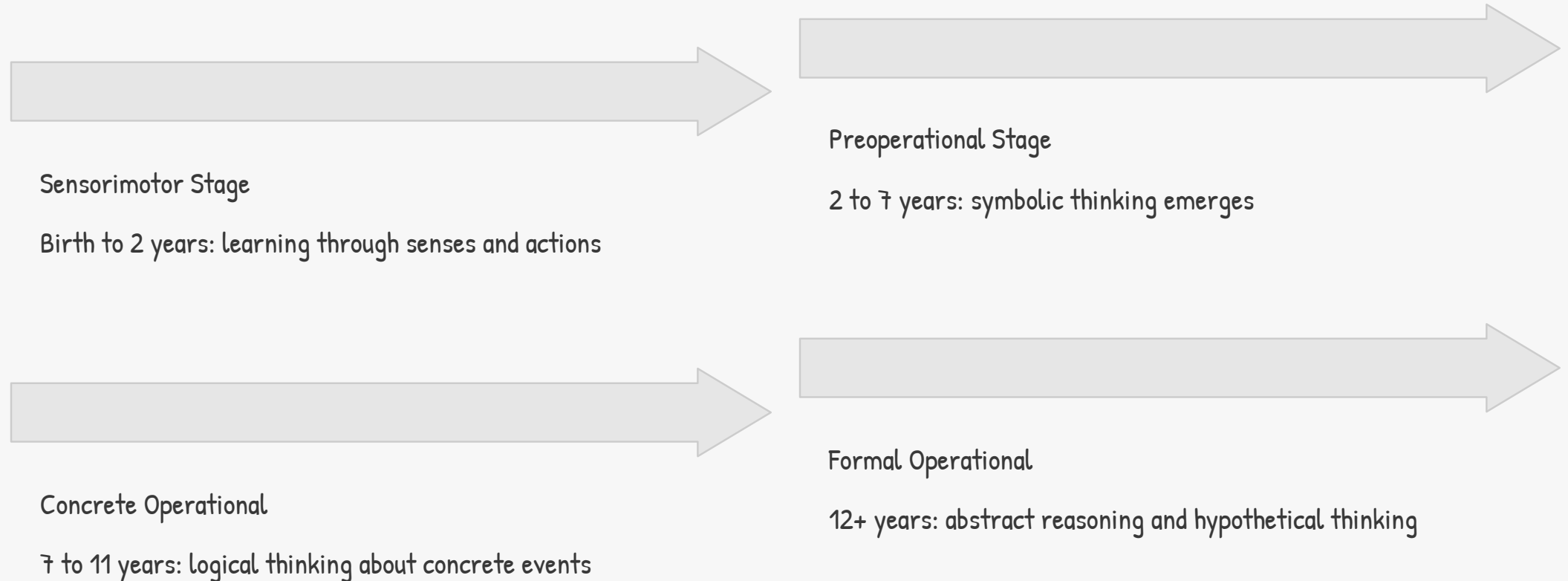
Emphasizes interpersonal relationships and growth resulting from them, centering on personality development and personal organization. The teacher facilitates rather than transmits content, as learning arises from students' own experiences.

Core Principles

- Knowledge is inherent to human beings
- Experience is the foundation of knowledge construction
- Education creates conditions facilitating student learning
- Goal is liberating capacity for self-learning
- Students become discerning persons



Cognitivist Educational Approach



Piaget and Bruner developed this approach emphasizing cognitive development through progressive stages. Education must work with concepts at operational levels consonant with the student's developmental stage, promoting discovery, experimentation, comparison, and hypothesis formation.



Sociocultural Educational Approach

Paulo Freire's Liberating Pedagogy

This approach addresses society divided into classes where privileges of some prevent the majority from enjoying produced goods, including education. Freire proposed two pedagogies: that of the dominant and that of the oppressed.

Key Concepts

- **Conscientization:** Critical awareness of oppression
- **Praxis:** Inseparability of reflection and action
- **Dialogicity:** Educator and learner as co-creators
- **Problem-posing education:** versus banking model

Educational Goals

Not merely transmission of knowledge, but transformation of reality. Education must provoke critical reflection committed to action, developing attitudes that challenge oppression and promote liberation.

The Christian Approach to Education

Christ-Centered Formation

Christian education is not merely adding Bible classes to curriculum or hiring evangelical professors. It is a comprehensive process of training and developing the person and their natural gifts in light of the Christian perspective on life, reality, world, and humanity.



Scripture-Centered

All disciplines taught through the lens of biblical truth



Character-Focused

Development of Christian virtues and Christ-like character



Relationship-Oriented

Promoting deep communion with God and love for Creator

Distinguishing Christian and Religious Education

Religious Education

Transmission of concepts and values from any religion regarding universe origins, family relevance, moral and ethical values, and belief in transcendent being.

Must ensure respect for Brazilian cultural and religious diversity. Vetoes any form of proselytism. Can encompass Buddhist, Spiritist, Islamic, or Christian education.

Christian Education

Specifically contemplates Christian principles centered in Sacred Scripture. Not synonymous with religious education generally.

Also distinct from theological education, though theology serves it. Goes beyond formal ministerial training to include biblical teaching focused on relational knowledge of God.

The Objectives of Christian Education



Paul made this clear to Timothy: "What you heard from me...entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). The sequence reveals all three objectives working together.

First Objective: To Inform

We live in a world of voluminous and rapid information. Many means exist for accessing information, which has become highly valuable—companies selling information are worth much in the market.

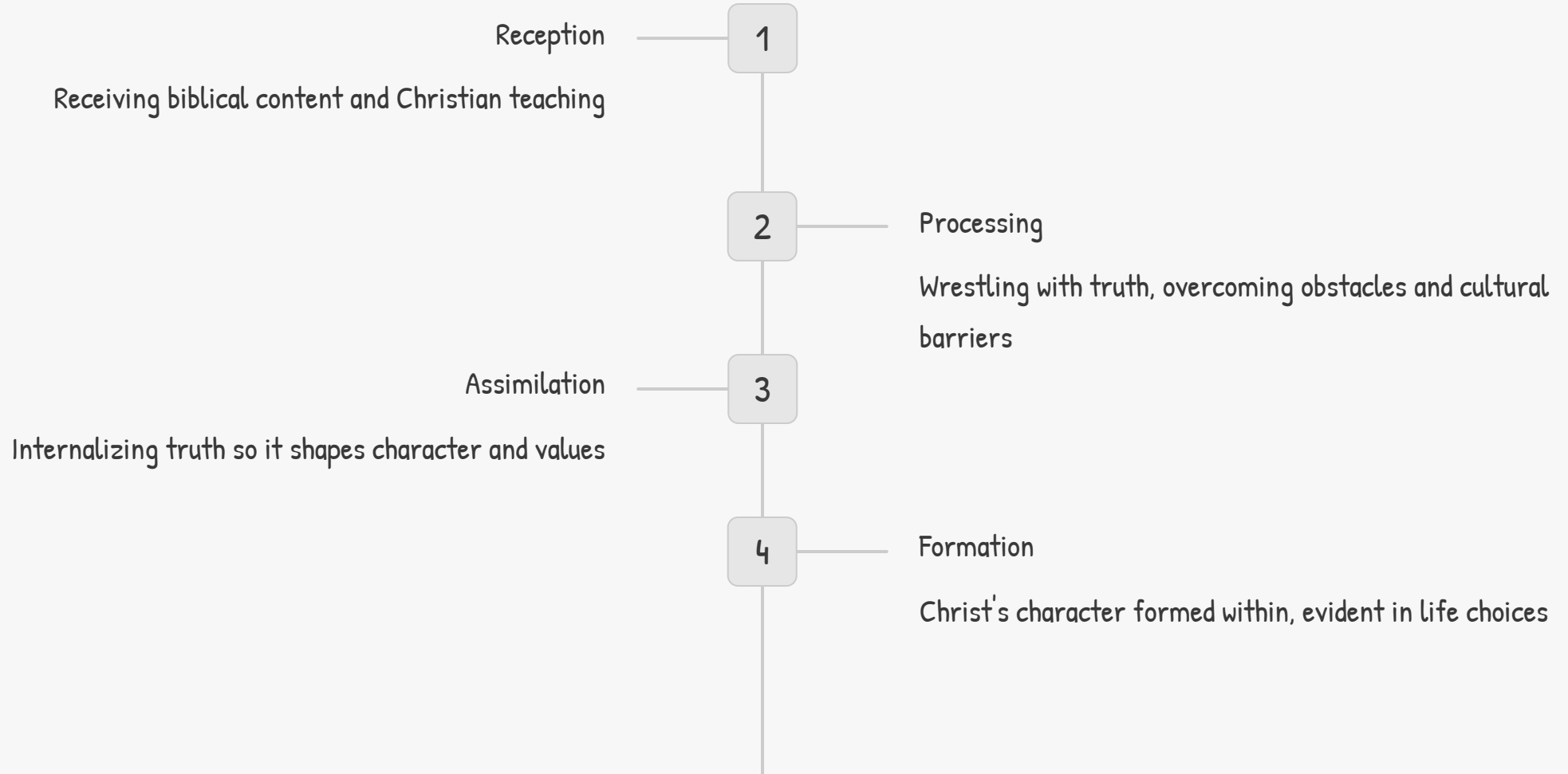
But information must be more than accumulated. In Brazil, many are functional illiterates—they read but don't understand. This reflects a cultural heritage where people read very little.

“A country is made with men and books.” —Monteiro Lobato

Christians must learn to select what they read, seeking general culture always through the lens of God's revelation and Gospel principles.



Second Objective: To Form



Formation is more difficult than information. It deals with character and assimilated values. Paul experienced "birth pangs until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). The basic problem of country, church, and society is not information but formation.

Third Objective: To Transform

If informing is beginning and forming is means, transforming is the end or final product. You have raw material (inform), production means (form), and finished product (transform).

Paul uses the word *metamorphosis* for the verb transform: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

Characteristics of Transformation

- Change is perceived and evaluated positively
- Character of Christ formed through Word teaching
- Pleasure in glorifying God through attitudes and acts
- Coherent and compelling testimony
- Becomes agent of change, not conforming to error

Ongoing Process

Once changed, always in mutation until Christ returns. Transformed persons seek perfection within the growth cycle, constantly reexamining tradition to give the church conditions to shed light on new questions.

What Defines Christian Education?

Christian education is a process of training and development of the person and their natural gifts in light of the Christian perspective on life, reality, world, and humanity.

This means developing curriculum and educational programs where disciplines and activities explicitly reflect Christian mentality. Teaching sciences, history, communication, sociology from Christian presuppositions.

Biblical Worldview

Adopting theories and philosophies reflecting biblical teaching on humanity as God's image, though morally and spiritually fallen

Distinctive Environment

Developing education in distinctly Christian atmosphere with discipline, effectiveness, and good relationships

Holistic Development

Promoting character development, discipline, conduct, and deep relationship with God

The Role and Importance of Presuppositions

Presuppositions in education are the set of beliefs, premises, and pre-convictions creating avenues through which understanding, knowledge, and learning process. They form the mentality behind the educational process.

Neutrality is a Myth

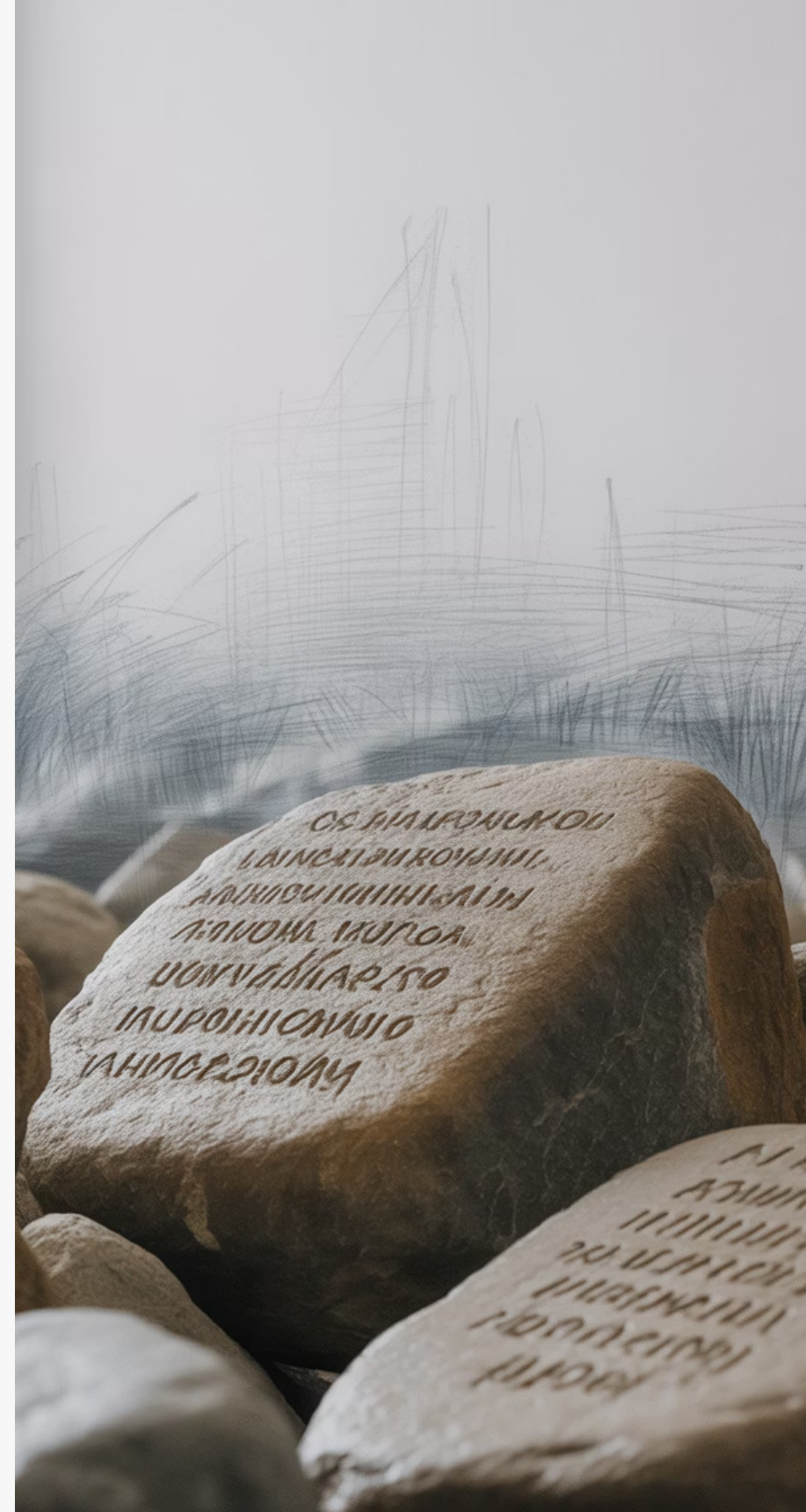
No neutrality exists in research, knowledge, learning, and educational process. The belief in neutral education was an illusion of modernity already debunked by postmodernity.

Mentality, formed by presuppositions, controls teaching, choice of books and teachers, methodology, and curriculum.

Christian Mentality

Should be molded by fundamental Christian presuppositions:

- Oriented by supernatural (vs. naturalism)
- Perspective of eternity, heaven, and hell
- History from God's providential perspective
- World from Creation perspective
- Consciousness of evil's presence
- Recognition of inherent human corruption



Why Invest in Christian Education?

Cultural Mandate

God's order to humanity to dominate creation (Genesis 1:27–28). Obeying this mandate means researching, studying, understanding, and thus dominating creation—all from perspective of faith.

Lordship of Christ

Christ is exalted with authority over all cosmos. His redemption has cosmic aspect, encompassing entire creation. Redemption includes not only soul but mind, body, with profound social, economic, political, and intellectual implications.

Great Commission

"Make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Discipleship involves spiritual and intellectual development, formation of Christian mentality, development of natural aptitudes—all from early age, beginning in school.

Nature of Humanity

Humanity created in God's image and likeness. All human knowledge is religious (Romans 1). Secular education is also religious, though not Christian—it is idolatrous, placing humanity as measure, center, and end of education.



Priorities in Theological Education

Empty Pulpits, Full Temples

The Brazilian church experiences singular moment in history. Growing numbers of churches and denominations brought visibility to evangelicals. We've reached all social classes and exploded in media presence. Yet quantitative growth hasn't been accompanied by quality.

There are temples full but pulpits empty. Choreographies and worship in diversified rhythms abound, but God's powerful voice isn't always audible. Many values are counted, but Christian character values are scarce.

We need reformation. We need return to Scriptures. This is only possible if Theological School commits to forming men and women committed to Scripture teaching.

A Model for Quality Theological Education

1

Prepare ministers integrally

Addressing intellectual, social, operational, personal, and affective development

2

Form ministers committed to Scripture teaching

Making God's Word central to all ministerial formation and practice

3

Prioritize character in function exercise

Forming Christ's character, not merely transmitting information

4

Offer opportunities for ministerial practice

Uniting theoretical knowledge with practical ministry experience

5

Prepare leaders who serve churches

Training servants rather than professionals seeking positions

Integral Formation of Ministers

Fundamental Principle

Education's fundamental principle is contributing to person's integral development, considering student as whole, avoiding fragmentation. A model emphasizing formation of mature lives intellectually, socially, operationally, personally, and affectively.

Only a total being can fully realize themselves in what they execute and in ministry performance. This requires reviewing educational objectives, curricular planning, programmatic content, teacher preparation, and student vision.

Uniting Theory and Practice

For integral minister formation and holistic church mission, theoretical and practical teaching cannot be dissociated. Insertion of contents valuing culture, ethics, and citizenship prepares student to contextualize Gospel message to new realities.

Commitment to Scripture Teaching

The true teaching that Theology proposes is teaching of the Word. No curricular content should supersede God's voice expressed in sacred text.

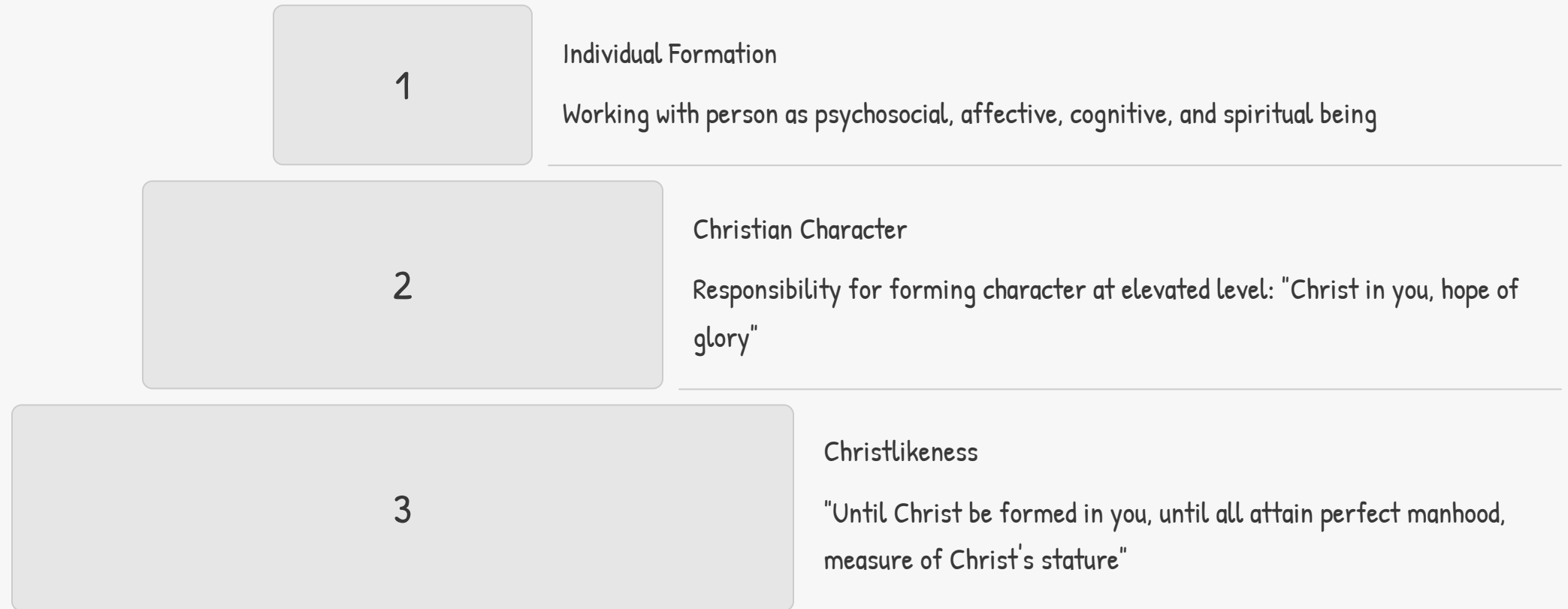
We remain convinced that God's Word furnishes the atemporal paradigm defining pastoral nature and characteristics. If Scripture doesn't have centrality in life and ministerial practice, we cannot affirm we are prophets for our generation.

Unfortunately, many preachers—not just televised or neopentecostal, but pastors who passed through renowned seminaries—substitute Sacred Scripture with self-help words, humanistic and philosophical argumentation, imaginary stories about biblical text, leaving genuine Word teaching obsolete.

John Stott's Reminder

"God's old Word is current because it reaches 21st century humanity in their real necessities. It speaks to culture, context, ecosystem, social and economic questions. The Bible is divine precept for all people in all epochs and all cultures."

Prioritizing Character Formation



Education has stumbled in the arduous mission of formation. We've focused on intellectual functions. As Christian educators, we've also stumbled, forming people insignificantly compared to how much we inform.

Creating consciousness of moral, personal, and spiritual values and conducting person to elaborate value judgment to decide for themselves and act with autonomy is what we should aim for.

Offering Ministerial Practice Opportunities



Beyond Conceptualization

Theological education must excel in offering practice justifying knowledge pursuit. It shouldn't restrict content to conceptualizations and knowledge codification.

First, we must comprehend the world and context we're inserted in. Knowledge only has value if capable of making human interaction with habitat and social context.

Second, for pleasure of understanding Truth to make it understood in each person's *modus vivendi*.

If theological schools' mission is preparing workers to serve Church and communities, presenting Christ's Gospel as message for whole person's necessities, they must provide real experiences so students contact various social classes and feel individuals' needs whom message must reach.

Preparing Ministers Who Serve Churches

We receive students from church and cannot prepare them well without maintaining link with church. We know the called comes from church where they received calling and that, after preparation time, they'll return to serve in their community—at least that should be the proposal.

The Challenge

Why did some denominations become disappointed with their teaching institutions? Because they received called ones more unbelieving regarding Bible than when sent, more knowing of modern thinkers than Church fathers. Some couldn't insert themselves in ecclesiastical activities.

The Solution

Teaching institutions must position themselves as churches' partners in forming their called ones. Church, in turn, must assume its part in partnership, accompanying spiritual, practical, and academic development of its members.

The Profile of the Prepared Minister

With Theologian's Mind

Capable of thinking theologically to expose divine Truth with profundity, clarity, and precision

With Mystic's Heart

Experienced in devotional life, in spirituality field and relationship with God. Graduated in spiritual disciplines

With Trailblazer's Courage

Trained in practice, daring like pioneers who crossed frontiers, ready for any task type aimed at eternal Kingdom expansion

With Saint's Humility

Capable of coexisting with people of different education levels, culture, divergent doctrinal points, distinct gift forms. Treated in personality, worked in emotions, strengthened with God's superabundant grace



The Importance of Christian Education in the Church

A Capacitated and Capacitating Community

It is God's plan that the church be a capacitated and capacitating community. Without this, she cannot fulfill God's mission in the world.

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Christian Education is fundamental for any church to be mature. Spiritual gifts are capacitations of grace given "to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7). Among these gifts is teaching, with teachers (*didaskalos* in Greek) as principal responsible for community's didactic development.

Fundamental Steps for Saints' Perfecting

1

Direction is Necessary

"Let us grow up in every way into him who is the head, Christ" (v.15). From Christ, the head, the body grows and develops its capacities. Christ is center, giving direction and motivation.

2

Everyone's Involvement

"From whom the whole body" (v.16). By love for Christ and his body, all now involve themselves. Our involvement isn't fruit of someone repeatedly asking but because we love the Lord.

3

Organization

"Properly joined together" (v.16). For church growth and development in same direction, all must serve in coordinated form. Body is organism needing organization.

4

Teamwork

"Held together by every joint" (v.16). Work must be coordinated, in team where all are important, one entering contact with another, one attached to another.

5

Each Knows Mission

"Grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (v.16). Whole is constituted of parts. Each part must cooperate aiming body supply.

Education's Importance: Three Capacitations

1. Christlikeness

"Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13)

Without knowledge of God's Son, faith unity will never exist. Gathering without knowledge risks worsening instead of improving things.

2. Discernment

"So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Ephesians 4:14)

Truth conducts; error induces. Community without Christian education will easily be induced by men's cunning and craftiness whose focus is diverting God's church from living in Truth.

3. Service Performance

"For the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12)

Here is relation between theory and practice! Christian education's purpose is service—capacitating saints for God's mission in world. Knowing without doing is Pharisee thing, not mature Christian.



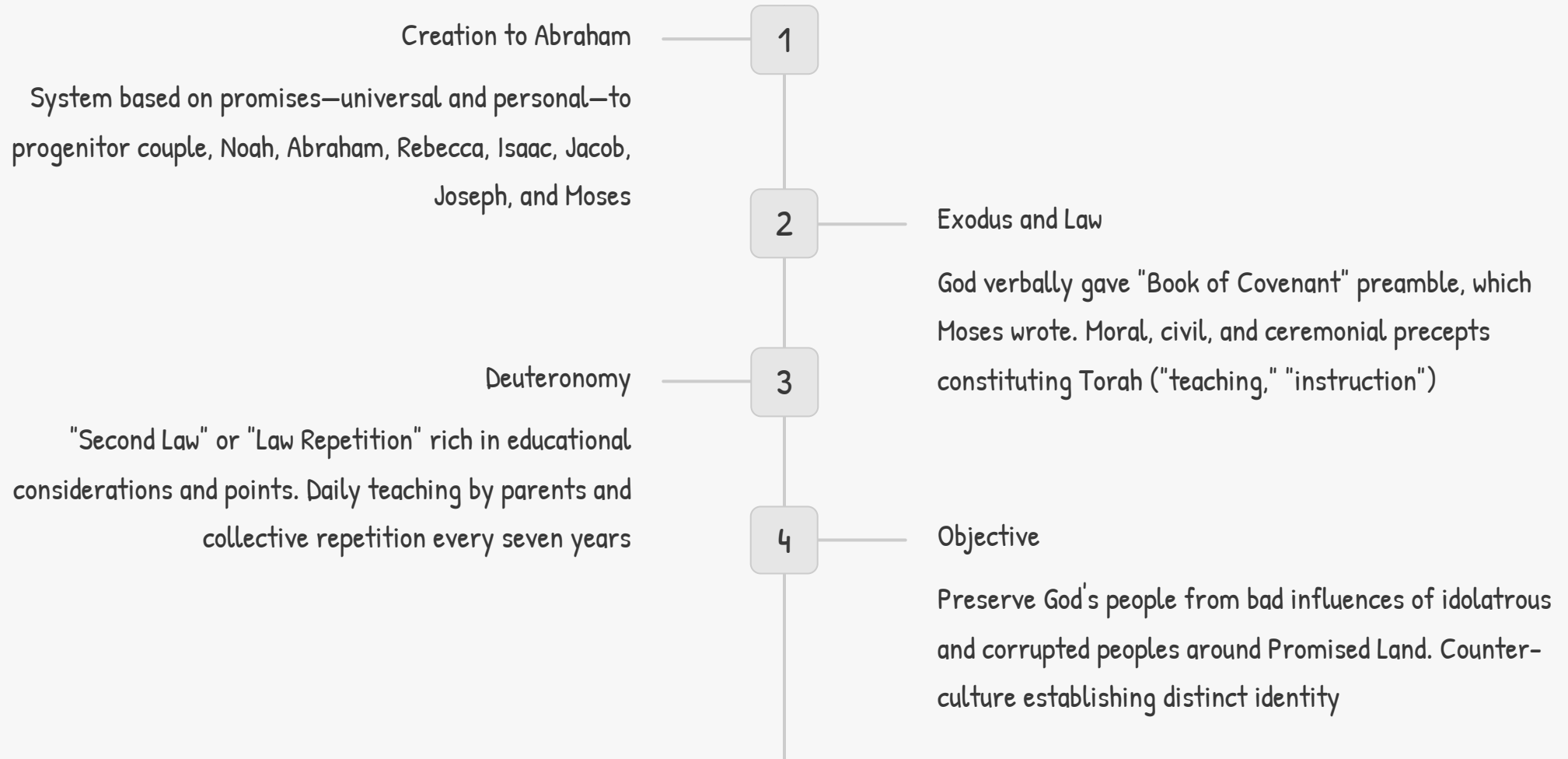
The Church's Teaching Vocation

Programs developed by Christianity under the nomenclature "Christian Education" may seem relatively new. However, the task of educating and forming people to obey God transcends much beyond our era's historical period.

The embryonic stage of all Bible education program, including Christian Education, occurred in Eden (Genesis 2:15-17), having as learners our progenitors—Adam and Eve—and as Educator, the Lord God.

This first class's content contained duties, rights, restrictions, and punishments—elements present in any constitution. That education always was inherent task to religious process, from personal devotion to formalized liturgy.

Jewish-Religious Education in Old Testament



Christian Education: Present and Future

Go and Make Disciples

According to Matthew 28:19-20, our mission's scope, depth, and objective are unequalled proportions. The task falling on Church shoulders is compulsory and irrevocable: Preach, Baptize, and Disciple/Educate.

The Great Commission's purpose is making disciples of all nations who will observe Christ's commandments. For this, it's necessary to teach everything He ordered and taught.

Church must educate because it's inherent to her nature—part of her teaching vocation. This work can only succeed counting on Holy Spirit's help in sustaining, sending, and spiritual enabling. May we fulfill this calling with excellence, preparing each generation to know God, love Him supremely, and serve Him faithfully until Christ returns.

