



# Beyond Academics

As a parent you are more than aware of the cost of raising children, a cost that includes not only finances but a substantial investment of love, time, and energy. You have chosen to make a major investment in your children's education through Christian schooling.

Christian school education is a distinctive kind of education. It goes beyond preparing your children in the academic disciplines, developing their skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking. Of course, the intellectual development of your children is more than important; it is vital. But the distinctive of Christian schooling is that it integrates spiritual formation into the intellectual development of each student.

Christian schooling is about educating the whole student, for it is the student's knowledge and understanding of Scripture and its application in life that makes the difference.

I have four minutes left and one important choice to make. Either skate through the rest of the program believing that something constructive will come of the mishap, concentrating and performing through to the end, or continue to dwell on the fall and its consequences, inviting more mistakes caused by a negative frame of mind. A Scripture flashes through my mind that helps me with my decision: "The righteous shall fall, but they shall not be utterly cast down." I suddenly grasp God's perspective: He will use our successes and our failures to teach us about ourselves and to show the world His glory. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). I move on, accepting a new role. I admit imperfection and decide to skate "... heartily as unto the Lord"—for God's glory rather than my own results.

**"God had allowed me to go into the wilderness, where I tasted some bitter defeats, but then He allowed me to skate my best when it truly counted."**

This difference may be best illustrated in the following account of Paul Wylie, a 1988 Olympic skater. The passage is reprinted from his essay "On Gravity and Lift" in the book *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*.

In 1988, Paul Wylie, one of three Americans, has taken the ice for his figure skating competition in Calgary at the winter Olympics. As he sets up for the first jump in his program he is no sooner in the air than he realizes something is horribly wrong:

A flash later my hand touches the ice; the blade will not hold. I start slipping and now I realize it: I am falling. All I hear as I collapse to the ice is the emphatic groan of what seems like a million voices. I struggle to get up, hustling to get to the next move, thoughts racing through my mind as I try to cover the disappointment. There is no way of erasing a fall from the judges' minds, nor can I jam the television transmissions to the living rooms of friends and family watching at home. This is live and I have just blown it.

At the end of the program, the audience surprises me with a rousing ovation. They appreciate the comeback after the initial mistake, having sensed the abandon and determination I felt to redeem the rest. The audience forgave the initial glitch, but the judges—they never do.

Here is where the distinctive of Christian schooling plays out. As we seek to develop each student to his or her full potential in Christ, two things happen: First, students learn the truths of Scripture and how to apply those truths to their lives, even as Paul Wylie drew on his understanding of Scripture in a time of need. And second, like the crowd at that Olympic event, the Christian school cheers the student on, helping to turn falls into victories.

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