

Objection #1 –Isn't a public high school a neutral environment for my son or daughter? (Isn't it good enough?)

First, a disclaimer is needed. The following paragraphs are not intended to be a slam of the public school system. It is acknowledged that many outstanding students, parents, and teachers that are Christian exist within the public school systems. Many parents are emotionally attached to their own public educational background, or their local public high school. This article is not meant to disparage those feelings. The intent of this article is to give Christian parents one simple message: your children deserve better.

Scripturally speaking, the message or worldview espoused by any school **CANNOT** be neutral. A worldview is either Christian or non-Christian. Christ himself put it this way:

He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.”(Matthew 12:30)

Do we honestly believe that when Christianity is removed from a school that it leaves . . . “nothing?” More to the point, in the words of a philosopher: *In the absence of religion, one is inevitably left with . . . **religion.***

If the worldview of a school isn't centered in Christ, then it doesn't take a genius to figure out what (or whom) it is centered in. If God is not the reference point for truth and learning (and He is not in the public high school), then something else must assume that role. That something *is most definitely religion – **the religion of secular humanism.***

Simple research into the philosophy of those who “founded” the concept of the public schools in America will expose men like John Dewey and Horace Mann for what they were – secular humanists who were dedicated to removing God from educational philosophy. In humanistic public high schools, your son or daughter will be told in some fashion that Biblical principles are irrelevant, absolute right or wrong do not exist, and that their ancestors were monkeys. Secular education officially and deliberately excludes God from the classroom. By doing so, public high schools will inevitably promote, consciously or subconsciously, non-Christian philosophy and worldview.

At best, a Christian student in this environment will fight the constant battle of discernment – every day dissecting what is being presented and avoiding the influence of the humanistic worldview. At worst, a Christian student will entertain non-Christian thought, often mixing it with his/her Christianity, or worse yet – become influenced away from the truth of Jesus Christ altogether. Consider the words of George Barna, author of *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*:

“Because our lives are played out on a spiritual battlefield, in which a war rages around us and within us at all times, there are a wide variety of agents of influence that seek to persuade us to embrace one approach to life or the other; that is, to live for and in obedience to God, or to live for and in obedience to Satan. These are the only two sides at war and the only two choices we have, even though few people would ever characterize being oblivious to God or being disobedient to Him as meaning they are serving Satan. It is politically incorrect to make such statements, but every human being has decided to be on one side or the other, whether the choice was intentional or not.”

Granted, much of the life of a Christian is spent in environments that are very non-Christian in nature. Discernment of right and wrong while in the world is indeed an important spiritual discipline. Is your son or daughter ready for 35-50 hours a week of a message that says, “Your worldview is wrong, intolerant, and old-fashioned.”? Again, they deserve better:

“A family can benefit from the help of a supportive community, especially when that community is grounded in the Christian faith – a faith that is genuine, unchanging, readily accessible, focused on what matters to God and based on love and truth. Imagine the power that would be available to a family – any and every family – in which the parents are godly, biblically literate, responsible advocates of God's ways and supported by a godly, Bible-driven body of Christians who share the same spiritual goals for every believer's children.” (*Barna*)

Christian parents have the opportunity to help shape the worldview of their children for Christ – that opportunity exists at TLHS.

Objection #2 - Doesn't TLHS shelter kids from the real world? (Shouldn't they experience the real world of public high school?)

The "sheltering objection" to Christian education makes two erroneous assumptions about the spiritual nature of the world in which we live:

1. Kids need to experience (or be around) sin to know how to avoid it.
2. A Lutheran/Christian high school is somehow without sin (or does not have as much sin) as a public high school.

Let's start with the first assumption. Scripturally speaking, the Bible does not say, "surround yourself with sin 35-50 hours a week and you'll know how to avoid it." In fact, the Bible makes a clear case for avoiding temptation and evil influences. One need not experience or observe sin to know that it is wrong.

*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."
(1 Corinthians 15:33)*

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. (Proverbs 15:20)

What are parents who are seeking to give their children a "real world experience" hoping to accomplish? At best, you could be subjecting your kids to unnecessary peer pressure to become involved in traditional risky high school behavior: drinking, drugs, premarital sex, etc. At worst, they are in an environment that will not respect (and possibly denigrate) their Christian worldview. The overriding humanistic philosophies of the public school – Darwinism, moral relativism, secular humanism, etc. – **WILL** have an effect on the development of your son or daughter and how they think. 35-50 hours a week in that environment would be difficult for Christian adults to handle, much less for Christian adolescents who do not have fully developed brains and are seeking answers to life's biggest questions.

It is hard to see the logic in subjecting adolescents to unnecessary pressure to abandon the Christian truths that have been instilled in them from baptism. At a time when are kids are most vulnerable to influence, is it really wise to surround them with non-Christian influences?

So enrolling your son or daughter at TLHS will mean that they won't have to deal with these temptations? Unfortunately, NO – this is the second bad assumption. Put simply, Christian high schools have the same problems as any public high school. Anyone who has worked in or attended one can verify that. All of the same issues that plague other high schools – bullying, drinking, sex, even drugs, etc. – can plague Christian high schools as well. So what, then, is the value of a Christian high school education?

Here's the answer: *TLHS has the same temptations as other schools – **but it has different weapons to fight them.***

Because Jesus conquered sin on the cross, those weapons now include:

Reliance upon Word and sacraments
Clear delineation of Biblically defined right and wrong
Teachers and counselors who provide Scriptural Christian advice
An environment of fellow believers that encourages growth in Christ
An environment that exalts obedience to God's Word
Forgiveness when mistakes are made
Appropriate consequences when actions deserve consequence
Recognition of each student as a dearly loved child of God

If those solutions amount to "sheltering" then the response to someone who asks if TLHS "shelters its kids" is a resounding "Yes! Praise God." TLHS is a community *in* the world; but what distinguishes it from other schools is its striving against being *of* the world (*Romans 12:2-3*).

Objection #3 – Shouldn't my son or daughter be a witness to other students in the public high school? (I want my son or daughter to be a missionary in the field of the public high school!)

Ask yourself this: Are they ready? Then give your son or daughter a little test – pick out a few of these questions:

How do you know that God exists?
Isn't the Bible just a storybook?
How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?
What right do you have to suggest that Christianity is the only way to heaven?
Aren't all religions valid?
If your God is so great, why do bad things happen?

If their answers are slow to come, vague, or sound something like, "Well those things are true for me," you might want to face up to the fact that your son or daughter will probably **not** be an open witness for Jesus Christ in the secular humanistic environment of the local public high school. (For more on that environment, refer back to objection #1 – *Isn't a public high school a neutral environment for my son or daughter?*)

Some Christian students with the gift of evangelism can be witnesses to others in the public high schools. Their actions and relationships can be an effective witness for Jesus Christ. Yet, the majority of adolescents will be uncomfortable witnessing to others due to the simple fact that **they are untrained**. The analogies are endless:

We don't send untrained soldiers into combat.
We don't let untrained surgeons operate.
We don't let pastors preach unless they go to the seminary.
We don't send missionaries overseas until they are trained.

Does it seem odd that we would want to send our untrained youth into a non-Christian environment with the intent of them being effective witnesses?

The Bible department at TLHS is dedicated to training its students to be witnesses to others so that they can defend their Christian faith effectively in the open market place of ideas. The existence of God, the historical reliability of the Bible, Jesus' resurrection, and the validity of Christianity are topics that **are objectively studied** at TLHS. God's Word is used **to train** student disciples at TLHS. Our students can then, with the Holy Spirit working through them, be a witness to their non-Christian friends, and hopefully to others when they graduate from high school.

It will be exciting indeed when a TLHS alum returns to tell stories of using the tools that they learned at TLHS to defend their faith and tell others about Christ.

Witnessing about Jesus Christ is often a daunting task even for grown adults. Training to be disciples for Christ is a life-long affair. It is incumbent upon us as Christians to arm our youth with the tools that they need to adequately defend their faith. It is incumbent upon us as a church to live the words of St. Peter in 1 Peter 3:15:

But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a reason to anyone who asks for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Christian education up to age 13 or a couple of hours a week on Sunday isn't going to get it done. Christian high school education provides an opportunity to work with Christian families to train disciples to change the culture of our world for Jesus Christ. What a great opportunity we can give our children by sending them to TLHS. It is truly about winning souls for Jesus Christ.

Objection #4 - How can I possibly afford the tuition? (It's too expensive!)

It is true that Christian education comes with a fairly high price tag. Lutheran high schools across the country range in tuition from \$4500 to \$11000 a year. Spread out over 10 school months, that is a commitment of \$450 to \$1100 a month for high school education.

TLHS comes in at about \$545.00 a month. A few things to consider with that price tag:

- TLHS does provide financial aid for families that qualify for tuition assistance.
- TLHS works with several outside foundations that offer scholarship help.
- Trinity Lutheran Church seeks to support Trinity Lutheran School as it's number one mission project.

Even with assistance, the tuition amount may still seem daunting, especially when public school is virtually free. How does a middle-income family afford it?

Attitude and mindset are the keys! When something becomes a priority, it is easier to find a plan to make it work. If you believe that a Christian high school education is important in the academic and spiritual development of your son or daughter, then sacrifices in other areas become more doable. For instance:

Cell phones (\$60 a month) or Christian education?
Cable (\$40 a month) or Christian education?
Eating out four times a month (\$100 a month) or Christian education?
Internet (\$40 a month) or Christian education?
New clothes (\$60 a month) or Christian education?
Starbucks once a week (\$20 a month) or Christian education?
Gym membership (\$40 a month) or Christian education?
Saving for elaborate vacations (\$60 a month) or Christian education?

If Christian education was a top priority, it is possible that \$400 a month could be saved just in the examples above. In fact, this is exactly how many TLHS families are affording the tuition right now:

Committed Christian families, with the Lord's help, are making it work to send their children to TLHS. Committed Christian parents are doing what it takes to provide Christian education for their kids. Is it often a huge sacrifice? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Nothing is more important than the daily presence of God's Word in the lives of your son or daughter. Nothing. The future value of your investment now is well worth the sacrifice that it takes to make it happen.

Objection #5 - But they want to go where their friends are going! (Shouldn't I let them stay with their friends?)

This question may be masking an underlying question: Who should make the decision where your son or daughter will go to high school? Should that decision be made solely by the parents, solely by the student, or through a combined effort?

Parents who allow their kids to make or share in the decision about where they will go to high school might be faced with this type of logic:

You:

"I've thought and prayed about it and I would like you to go to TLHS."

Him or her :

"But, mom and dad, all of my friends are going to (fill in a public high school here)! You aren't going to separate me from my best friends, are you?"

Now what do you do?

Friends are extremely important to the average 13-14 year old. It is not surprising that they would want to do what their friends are doing. High school can be a scary proposition and going into a new environment with their best friends at their side can be very appealing. This argument is probably the most compelling one that a kid can make to his or her parents.

The answer to this dilemma is two-fold:

1. Parents should make the decision about high school for their son or daughter. Your son or daughter's input should be considered, but ultimately, decisions about the spiritual well being of your children should be yours.

If you believe that choosing a high school will play a role in the spiritual development of your son or daughter (it will), then making that decision for them is not only prudent – it's Scriptural:

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

It is truly amazing that excellent parents, who have guided and made the right spiritual decisions for their children since birth, will often allow their 13-year old kids to choose where they will spend 40-50% of their awake time for the next four years of their life. Unbelievable, really.

2. They will make new friends. That may be a harsh reality for them to grasp, but not only can they stay in touch with their existing friends, but they will make new ones as well.

If you have ever spent considerable time around high school students, you would know that friends and social circles are ever changing for kids during those four years. It is rare indeed that a student has the same best friend as a senior that he/she does as a freshman.

Regardless, the beauty of a Christian education is that it provides an environment that holds to a Christian worldview perspective. Your son or daughter can make friends that will encourage his/her walk with Christ. They will be taught at TLHS what it means to be a true Christian friend to others. They will have the opportunity to rise above the normal shallow adolescent friendships and learn what it means to truly love others as Christ loved them.

Objection #6 - Doesn't bigger mean better?

Oregon is full of impressively huge, new high schools. A quick tour through many of the public high schools in the Bend area will reveal beautiful gyms, weight rooms, auditoriums, cafeterias, and labs. It seems only natural that parents would take one look around at the facilities, programs, classes, and activities that a huge public school has and think, "That's what we want for my son or daughter."

For smaller Christian schools, like TLHS, it is nearly impossible to compete with the endless stream of resources that a public high school can pour into its programs and facilities. So in the face of that kind of competition, why would anyone choose a small, Christian school?

It's time to ask yourself an important question:

Which do you value more, "things" or environment?

Please check out Objection #1 to read up on the importance of an environment that is Christ-centered. Along with this it should also be ***noted that TLHS provides advantages that a large public high school simply cannot:***

- **Students are less likely to get lost in the shuffle.** At a smaller school, teachers and administrators will often know the names of all of the students in the building. That kind of intimacy is often key in the academic and spiritual development of your son or daughter. TLHS is dedicated to making connections with all students. Relationships, not facilities, are what make a school excellent.
- **Class sizes are smaller.** Instead of classes of 30-45 that can be found at larger schools, most Christian schools have class sizes that are more in the 15-25 range. While class size is often overrated (the skill of the teacher is more important), your son or daughter will not just be "a number" at TLHS.
- **Opportunities to participate in extra-curricular are greater at a smaller school.** Simple math dictates that your son or daughter's odds of "making a team" or "getting a part" are better if they are competing against less people. Many of the students take advantage of this unique situation and are involved in many different activities during their time at TLHS.
- **We are a family.** At a smaller school, students, parents, and teachers feel as if they are part of community in which they can take pride and have input. People know each other, and relationships become the foundation for the excellence of the school, not facilities and programs.
- **Most Christian schools actually HAVE extremely adequate facilities and programs.** It's a misconception that because Christian schools are smaller and often have financial challenges, that they do not have good gyms, weight rooms, auditoriums, labs, activities, and programs. If you haven't had a chance to check out the facilities at TLHS, you should do so soon.

A caring, Christian environment that values each of its students as special children of God is a wonderful thing. When that environment is small enough that kids do not get lost in the shuffle, it's even better.

Objection #7 - But won't my son or daughter have a better chance of a college athletic scholarship if he or she goes to a larger public school?

This objection to Christian education is born out of a fear that athletes at a smaller Christian school won't receive the quality of coaching and development that a larger public school can provide and that their talent could go unnoticed.

Neither of these fears is justified. Parents that insist that a small Christian school could be costing their son or daughter a chance at college scholarship are ignorant to how colleges and universities find athletes.

Consider these statements:

- **If your son or daughter has Division I talent, it doesn't matter where he/she goes to high school** – schools will find them. The scouting and recruitment programs at colleges today must search all high schools to find talent. The competition is fierce for the best players – no matter where they go to school. To think that a talented player would go “unnoticed” is to believe that major colleges and universities aren't exhausting every avenue to find talent. That is a bad assumption.
- **Smaller Christian high schools are often better connected to Division II and Division III schools** since those schools must recruit outside of the large public high schools to find talent to stay competitive.
- **The nature of college recruiting has changed over the last ten years.** Students with athletic ability who aren't sure-fire blue-chip prospects **MUST** market themselves with the help of their high school and high school coach. The web is full of college recruitment services that help players and parents market their son or daughter. It is more important to find a high school that has coaches who will work with players and parents to videotape, call coaches, and work with recruitment services. TLHS coaches will work with athletes to connect them to programs where they can be successful.
- **Most Christian schools have quality athletic programs** that include good facilities, weight rooms, strength and conditioning programs, and coaches who assist good athletes in finding a college to match their ability. They also have talented coaches who are coaching at a smaller high school not because they don't have the talent to coach at a larger high school, but because they are dedicated to being at a Christian school. TLHS has everything that is needed to develop athletes for competition at the college level.
- **Parents often over-estimate the athletic abilities of their son or daughter.** That statement may seem harsh, but according to NCAA statistics, for instance, only 2.9% of all boys high school senior basketball players will fill a freshmen roster position at any level of NCAA college basketball. That means that your son must be better than 97 out of every 100 senior basketball players in the country to make an NCAA roster. The percentage of seniors that would actually receive scholarship money would be far less than that. (See chart below)

	Men's Basketball	Women's Basketball	Football	Baseball	Men's Soccer
High School Student Athletes	549,500	456,900	983,600	455,300	321,400
High School Senior Student Athletes	157,500	130,500	281,000	130,100	91,800

NCAA Student Athletes	15,700	14,400	56,500	25,700	18,200
NCAA Freshmen Roster Positions	4500	4100	16,200	7300	5200
% of High School Seniors that will fill an open college roster position	2.9%	3.1%	5.8%	5.6%	5.7%

(2006 national statistics taken from NCAA.org and reflect all levels of NCAA competition.)