



Urban Classical Education

with Russ Gregg

Lesson 4: Developing Cultural Competency

Outline:

Introduction

- Urban classical Christian school represent one of the great opportunities to display gospel-driven, racial harmony to the watching world.
- Our schools can help fulfill the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Harmony is a Gospel Priority

- Revelation chapter 5 presents us with a beatific picture of diversity of language, tribe, people and nation
- To pursue racial harmony in our schools we must:
- Recognize the *imago Dei* (image of God) in our students
- See the passage from *The Weight of Glory* by C. S. Lewis
- It may be possible for each of us to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. Remember, there are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.

Avoid Education Apartheid

- **Mortimer Adler:** “The education that is best for the best is best for all.” See the *Paideia Proposal* by Mortimer Adler.
- **In food desert of the inner city, don't serve kids a “hot dog” education.**
- **Do not give a lower standard of education to inner-city children.**

Articulate and Promote a Kingdom Culture

- Cast a vision for Kingdom Culture that transcends black, white, Latino, and Native cultures that has the power to unite diverse cultures without homogenizing them
- Examples of Kingdom values for all: respect and honor for community elders, humility



- Some cultural practices to be affirmed, some to be condemned according to the teaching of the Gospel
- The Christian life (regardless of our inherited culture) is to be a life of daily repentance—and nowhere more so than in pursuing racial harmony.

Promote a Bi-Cultural Portrait of a Graduate

- Remember that almost all our students will suffer an identity crisis in middle school
- Being bi-cultural is analogous to being bi-lingual
- Students should learn to be at ease and competent in inner-city culture and the world outside the inner-city
- Students at Hope Academy learn how to do spoken word poetry and recitation
- It is very important to find qualified staff of color

Humility is Absolutely Necessary

- **Conduct listening sessions with parents.** Those of us who are part of the majority culture are often oblivious to the “unseen” currents of oppression that people of color face every day.
- Note that some of your “heroes” are subject to legitimate criticism when it comes to issues of race. Abraham Lincoln, one of Russ’s heroes, said this:
- Mr. Lincoln took the stand at a quarter before three, and was greeted with vociferous and protracted applause; after which, he said:
- “Ladies and Gentlemen, while I was at the hotel today, an elderly gentleman called upon me to know whether I was really in favor of producing a perfect equality between the negroes and white people. [Great Laughter.] I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, [applause]—that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.”
- Lincoln succumbed to the lie that there are gradations in the image of God... sometimes we too may fall into such thinking.
- Russ notes the ways he has fallen into this kind of thinking himself

So What Does Imago Dei Education Mean for the Youth of Our Cities?

- It means that the mis-education of inner-city youth should be one of the most important social justice issues of our day.



- It means that one of the best strategies to redeem and transform the inner-city is a great school that shapes a generation of wise leaders who love what God loves and hates what God hates.
- It means that all children are image bearers of God, and so a school for our neighbors has to be a remarkable school, not just an average one, the kind of school we would want our own children to attend.
- It means that because mankind's chief problem is sin, and because Christ is a great Savior from sin, school needs to be based on the gospel and the teachings of Christ.
- It means that inner-city parents shouldn't be ignored, but they need to be deeply involved in the solution, and they have to have some real skin in the game.
- It means it's essential to do the really hard work of holding teachers, parents and students accountable for their responsibilities
- It means that results really do matter, and that we have to actually close the achievement gap.
- Finally, because it's currently against the laws of the State of Minnesota to use tax-payer dollars to provide Imago Dei Education to a child, it means that brothers and sisters living outside the neighborhood will need to help bear the burden and partner with inner-city families to make this kind of school affordable for everyone.

Recognize the Enduring Effects of White Privilege

- **Compare to a city that privileges transportation by automobile**
- **Lead from the back seat**
- **The Importance of Friendships**