

CHRISTIAN *School* COMMENT

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Happy Birthday, Jesus!

One of the joys of my ministry with ACSI is to travel with my wife, Bonnie, to visit member schools. The first week of December, we had the privilege of visiting Desert Christian Schools (DCS) in Lancaster, California. DCS is located in the high desert of California, on the western fringe of Los Angeles County.

The day we arrived was a beautiful, sunny day. We figured that the odds for this kind of day were definitely in our favor, since we were told that Lancaster has 362 days of sunshine every year.

The children greeted us with warm smiles, heartfelt hugs, a welcome banner, and a special song about Jesus. We toured the school and observed classroom after classroom of well-behaved, smiling children and teenagers. These students were receiving a quality education in a safe and inviting environment, and the moral principles they were learning and observing at this school were based on the values taught in the Holy Bible, the Word of God.

The day before this wonderful visit to DCS, Bonnie and I spent a day and a half with Paul and Annie Kienel. Paul and Annie welcomed us into their California home, and we enjoyed a sweet time of fellowship. Our time there was especially valuable to me as I continue to learn about ACSI in my new role as president, because Paul was a founding leader who served as president and CEO of ACSI.

As I interacted with Paul in his home office, my eyes were drawn to numerous pictures and awards framed and displayed on the walls. Of particular interest was a matted and framed document hanging on the wall over the couch. This document was the first issue of *Christian School Comment* (CSC), volume 1, number 1, dated September 1970. In this inaugural issue of CSC, Paul wrote, "I believe parents choose Christian schools because they want morality in education;... a reasonable, normal educational environment for their children;... quality education; and because they want to follow the scriptural

admonition of **Proverbs 22:6**,... 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' "

You see, as I travel and observe what God is doing in our Christian schools around the world, time and again I witness what Paul wrote about in his first CSC.

Bonnie and I enjoyed our entire visit, but the most memorable moment, the one that brought tears to my eyes, occurred in the auditorium of DCS as the elementary students were rehearsing for their annual Christmas concert. As I listened, my mind

flashed back to a wonderful memory of my oldest daughter, Lindi, singing at the age of four the same song my ears were now hearing once again: "Happy Birthday, Jesus. I'm so glad it's Christmas. All the tinsel and lights and the presents are nice, but the real gift is You. Happy birthday, Jesus.... Jesus, I love You."¹

Wow! What a vivid illustration of the number one distinctive of Christian schools in training students, a distinctive that is also my number one goal for my four children—that each of them will grow up thoroughly prepared to love and serve Jesus Christ.

During this holiday season, our commitment as people involved in Christian schools like DCS is to keep Christ in *Christmas* as we celebrate and enjoy its true meaning.

Happy Birthday, Jesus!

Note

1. Lyrics and music of "Happy Birthday, Jesus" by Carol Cymbala (Word Music, 1992).



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