

# KEYSTONE SENTINEL

Protecting and Promoting Christian Education



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Michael Clater, Editor

## boardroom

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### "I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT!!!" - CHAPTER 2

The August Boardroom article utilized this title. It focused on Christian education in PA and the law (and the Scriptures), disallowing the attitude and action of "I can do anything I want."

The August article stated that there are multiple subtopics under this title. Chapter 2 focuses on aspirations for life in the context of Christian education. Consider these tidbits that impact our focus:

- ♦ Pennsylvania public schools issue the same diploma for graduates regardless of their ability, GPA, or coursework.
- ♦ Our culture is increasingly interchanging the words "equality" and "equity." (Research it. Equality denotes that everyone starts at the same place and receives the same thing(s). Equity denotes that everyone is treated fairly and has equal opportunity.)
- ♦ There are increased pressures that arguably "dumb down" the public school curricula, including downgrading or banning "honors" classes, serving up the lowest common denominator.
- ♦ Our society and its public schools are increasingly very focused on student self-esteem, thus embracing entitlement and special treatment.
- ♦ Our life is increasingly exposed to the concept that "everyone gets an trophy."

All of us have experienced young children's responses when asked what they want to be when they grow up. We praise them. We smile. In contrast, when we are addressing an older student or adult, it should be expected that we have a more thoughtful response. Here is an actual case:

A teen was enrolled in the Christian school for several years. With his characteristics, he had been professionally, thoroughly tested and demonstrated an "IQ" of 85. A guest speaker spoke in school chapel. This teen with his history of witnessing responded that he desired to be more consistent in witnessing. The speaker gave counsel, encouragement,

guidance. The teen came away stating that it was the Lord's will for him to be a foreign missionary, planting churches, training nationals to be leaders. Hmmm.

Briefly, factors that shape what each student brings to school includes:

Aptitude. We have a variety of laymen words for this: smart vs dull, intelligent vs normal vs slow, etc. The differences are observable and important. One does not trust just anyone to be their surgeon. The same applies as we need an attorney, accountant, or project engineer.

Foundation. You and I have a legitimate argument with those who claim that government should provide free universal child care and pre-school, but none of us has an argument that the first six years of life greatly influence the trajectory for life. These years are crucial for the development of the mind and individual potential.

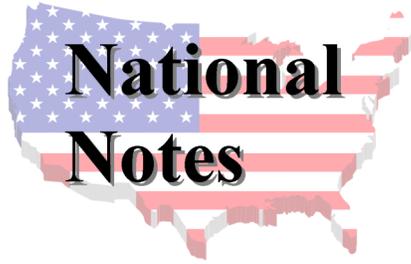
Environment. A plethora of factors outside oneself bring influence. Family harmony. Involvement in the arts. Attitudes of the community. Peer pressures. Second language. Team sports. Adequate finances. Vices present.

Education. Objective measurements indicate that all schools are not equal; and even within each school, the education received by a student varies. Families with a financial ability typically locate close to a school they perceive as "good." In addition to formal education, one should not overlook the contribution of family and acquaintances in informal education – reading, learning opportunities, discovery, educational toys and projects.

Motivation. This can come from family and can also be internal. A strong, positive dose enables one to excel over others who have advantages but lack drive, purpose.

In Christian education, faculty are in contact with diverse, unique individuals. Each has, and will develop, ideas of what they "want." Many are realistic, some are aspiring "too high" and some "too low." One of our tasks is to guide each toward being realistic with aspirations.

However, in Christian education, there is more. It is also our task to provide a biblical framework to influence life goals and aspirations. What does He want us to be? It is our task to propel every student to be everything he/she can be for His glory. That supersedes "the big I" of one's wants.



## A Potpourri of Common Sense Reminders

### Insurance Premiums Are Rising

We are all accustomed to seeing the impact of inflation. It is occurring in every area of our lives. However, *beyond inflation*, one should not be surprised if the next insurance contract for your school or church includes some changes. Nationwide, insurance companies have faced increasing payouts to policy owners. Part of this is attributed to major natural disasters. Part is related to violence or changes in culture. As this occurs, to be solvent, the companies must make adjustments. The dominant talk is that as policies are renewed, there will be a hefty increase in the deductible/co-pays without a decrease in premium. Other changes could be:

- Increase premium for the same coverage.
- Amend the policy language to cover fewer risks.
- Move some coverages from the basic policy to an optional policy rider.

Yes, a company might also be more selective in agreeing to write a specific client. Yes, state regulators might be involved with mandates.

*It is wise to be alert and astute when you receive a new policy or renewal. Don't just automatically pay an invoice. Don't just presume that the language of the new policy is identical to the former policy. Similarly, don't just look for the lowest premium as premiums are often reflective of coverage.*

### Federal, State, and Local Judges Are Not Robots.

While the selection or election of judges may have a cosmetic appearance that they are not partisan but neutral on all issues, that is clearly not so. One only needs to observe the wrangling that occurs at Washington over judge appointments. One only needs to carefully observe the endorsements that are given by diverse entities when there is an election for a judgeship. Yes, there are some issues that are "above" or "beyond" the philosophical bent of a judge, but there are many times where the judge's personal or experiential or philosophical mindset will influence a court case. *Just as it is important to research candidates for public office, it is important to research candidates for judicial office. That includes November 7, 2023, in Pennsylvania.*



### The Natural or Unnatural Application of "Identify"

We are all growing accustomed to the way we are being pressed to honor the sexual orientation of those who "identify" as a gender that does not match one's birth. Is this effort to press everyone to honor what others "identify" natural or unnatural. (We know it is political.) Try these alternate illustrations of what one might assert:

- "I identify that I am old enough to purchase alcoholic beverages, and thus I am old enough and you must allow me to make my purchase."
- "I identify that I am a medical doctor, and thus I have the right to practice medicine."
- "I identify that I am a registered voter, and thus you must allow me to vote."
- "I identify that I am the older brother of this girl, and thus I am taking her with me no matter how much she screams she does not know me."
- "I identify that I am a qualified pilot, and thus I insist on being allowed to be captain of this Boeing 737."
- "I identify that I am an "A" student, and thus you must give me an "A" on my transcript."

By the time you read half of the above list, you figured out that what one purports via their "identity" means virtually nothing. Yet, when it comes to the current trans culture, we are urged to do what is unnatural, to accept someone's word. *Maybe we all should have some "I identify as..." statements ready to give other citizens to aid them to see the weakness of the current cultural craze. Beyond the above six examples, what unnatural creative assertion do you have for how one might "identify?"*

### Citizenship Beyond Election Day

Is there time or priority in your life for attending a "Walk for Life" at Harrisburg (October) or at Washington (January)?  
... for attending a political rally for a candidate in whom you have confidence?  
... for visiting a legislator to discuss your view on an issue that would impact your church or foreign missions?  
... for periodically visiting the website of trusted organizations at Washington or Harrisburg to gain more knowledge of issues that are before our culture?

Those are but four examples. Many of us are quick to complain and even to be disrespectful of government officials we dislike, or actions we dislike. Without altering from a God-appointed spiritual mission on earth, what is your priority beyond voting? Do we intelligently pray for government officials as much as we criticize them? *What? Why? How? Think about it. What is the basis of your actions?*

# *The Bible and Society*

Recent Items of Interest for Believers

## Israel's Wars Reflect Spiritual Realities

The recent surprise attacks by Hamas troops from Gaza into Israel, along with heavily increased rocket barrages, has forced the West to take a harder look at pro-Palestinian movements and antisemitic speech. Some are (rightly) asking, "Why does this conflict exist?" Secular answers too often gloss over the inherently religious pretext that thoroughly infiltrates political documents.

We must remember that Satan remains active in the world, including through the actions of political leaders and in individual hearts. He has used numerous empires and nations to try to eliminate Israel from existence:

- ◆ Egypt
- ◆ The numerous smaller nations in the Promised Land
- ◆ Syria
- ◆ Assyria
- ◆ Babylon
- ◆ Persia
- ◆ Nazi Germany
- ◆ Arab nations in the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars
- ◆ Political/terrorist organizations Hamas and Hezbollah, combined with support from Iran

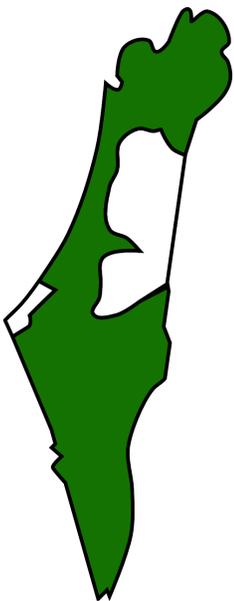


Image by [OpenClipart-Vectors](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The results of an NPR/PBS News-Hour/Marist poll conducted earlier this month reflect the shifting tide of support in the U.S. for Israel.

- ◆ Overall, 65% said America should voice public support.
- ◆ 78% of respondents aged 45 and older said the U.S. should publicly support Israel.
- ◆ Just 48% of those under age 45 said the U.S. should give public support for Israel.

These results should not be entirely surprising. Older generations have learned historical context, often living during these recent conflicts. Younger generations have too often been taught heavily biased or very lacking histories of Israel and the Middle East, leading them to either heavier skepticism of Israel or to

outright support Israel's sworn enemies. This shift also mirrors the decline of young Americans' spiritual support for the Bible and Christianity.

As Christians, we must apply the truths of Ephesians 6:11-13. Recognize that spiritual warfare is all around us. It is not isolated to just spiritual conflict in our churches and Christian schools. It washes over into the political arena, the arts, histories, and sciences.

Israel still has hope. The Jews need to see their lacking spiritual state before God, and their spiritual opportunity through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. They have "...not attained to the law or righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9:31-33).

Fairly neutral, non-Christian background on the current conflict and some historical context is available through a National Public Radio (NPR) report, [What to know about Hamas, whose militants attacked Israel from Gaza: NPR](#).

Results of the NPR-PBS/Marist poll are available at [As Israel-Hamas war continues, Americans remain supportive of Israel in new poll : NPR](#).

The broadly evangelical publication *Christianity Today* has a pertinent article that is also worth reading, [American Christians Should Stand with Israel unde... | Christianity Today](#).

## Roman Catholics at a Doctrinal Crossroad

In July, several cardinals submitted *dubia*, official requests for clarification on several key doctrinal issues. The *dubia* were sent to Pope Francis and the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which is a department within the Church that helps defend and promote Catholic doctrine. Key questions revolved around official blessings for gay marriage and for women being ordained as priests. Pope Francis provided long-form responses rather than simple 'yes' or 'no' answers, widening the door to situational interpretation. The *dubia* were then resubmitted for more direct responses. The questions have been taken up this month by the Synod on Synodality, an official international church meeting to discuss doctrine and its application in Church practice.



Image by [Annett Klingner](#) from [Pixabay](#)

A summary report of the meeting will be published sometime after the Synod's conclusion.

## Federal Court: No Parental Opt-Out of 'Diversity Curriculum' for Kids with Religious Opposition

Education and religious instruction. Both have been widely affirmed as central acts in individual rights in the U.S. But both have become increasingly undermined by progressive public school boards, curriculum decision-makers, and teachers across the country. Parental backlash to having even less say — in favor of 'the experts' making decisions for them — has been sharp, to the point of being a central political issue in the Virginia governor's race in the last election cycle.

This conflict continues between parents wanting to make choices for their own families and children based on their religious practice. In late August, a federal district court judge in Maryland ruled that parents could not opt their children out of the Montgomery County Public Schools curriculum that integrated pro-LGBTQ+ content. The ruling judge declared the opt-out opportunity based on religious grounds was not a "fundamental right."



Image by [Mark Thomas](#) from [Pixabay](#)

At issue was the addition of 22 books across the curriculum in Pre-K through grade 8 during the 2022-23 school year. These "pro-diversity" books teach favorably about gender transition, 'gay pride' events, and characters of LGBTQ+ 'identity'. Initially, the school district allowed parents to opt-out their children from the assignments, but it reversed the decision in March 2023.

The case, *Tamer Mahmoud v. Monica B. McKnight*, will be appealed to the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. [Maryland Court Strikes Down Parents' Request to Opt Kids Out of LGBT Curriculum | National Review](#)

## Report: Higher Education Consolidation to Continue

An analytical investment report has serious repercussions for states, educators, and Christians alike. The summary report, published in late September by Fitch Ratings, reviewed many facets of higher education and anticipates a bumpy road ahead. Key points in the analysis include:

- ◆ Continued closures or mergers among colleges and universities, both public and private
- ◆ Continued declines in higher education enrollment due to lower numbers of high school graduates entering college, thanks to a strong job market in fields not requiring college degrees
- ◆ Anticipation of limited increases in tuition and fees, as schools try to remain financially attractive and viable op-

tions for prospective students and families.

- ◆ Decreasing revenue from tuition and fees as enrollments continue to decline, forcing greater reliance on endowment, charitable, and/or governmental funding
- ◆ Cost-cutting measures (i.e., programs, faculty, major construction projects, etc.) will continue as schools try to increase efficiency while also being pressured by other costs (e.g., wages, insurance, energy, materials for renovations, repairs or new construction)

Major universities or systems, including West Virginia University (WVU) and the State University System of New York (SUNY), have announced structural changes due to enrollment changes, debt load, and other factors. (At SUNY's Potsdam campus, enrollment has decreased 43% since 2010. It also has a \$9 million budget deficit.) Both campuses will be eliminating majors or programs, along with cutting staff and/or faculty.

Christian colleges are not immune from this fiscal and enrollment pressure. On average, between 2015 and 2019, colleges with less than 3,000 students suffered a 4.8% decrease in enrollment. Noted factors to institutional decline were the lack of a strong brand, in combination with demographic changes in the institution's operational area.

- ◆ Our Christian colleges need to effectively communicate their spiritual positions and their educational strengths to the public, and especially to their "base."
- ◆ Families need to be more engaged with the messaging, activities, and 'product' coming from their favorite colleges, whether Christian or secular.
- ◆ Institutional positions matter. They reflect in the faculty and staff who mentor and teach your students.

[More U.S. Higher Ed Consolidation, Trimming or Closures to Come \(fitchratings.com\)](#)

## Israel-Hamas War: Impact on Giving to Education

The current Israel-Hamas war has exposed pro-terrorist, pro-genocidal speech on American college campuses. This has shocked some, and caused some high-profile donors to Harvard University and to the University of Pennsylvania to cut off their multi-million-dollar gifts. A Berkeley law professor even called on prospective employers not to hire their antisemitic, pro-Hamas students. More could be public in the future. Many are rethinking their institutional support. Christians, too, should:

- ◆ Acknowledge that it is worthy to financially support a deserving educational institution (all levels)
- ◆ Prayerfully research any school or college you are considering for enrollment or charitable giving
- ◆ Compare your own Biblical beliefs and worldview with that of the institution
- ◆ Match your financial giving to the school that best fits your beliefs, worldview, and priorities



## PA Senator Addresses Explicit Sexual Material in Schools

Increasingly in recent decades, PA public schools have included materials to which a conservative parent would object. It is attributed that many parents saw “inside” public school materials through the Covid-19 lockdown, and that this is one of the factors that led to a decrease in public school enrollment and an increase in enrollment at schooling alternatives.

Many public school board members and administrators assert that they are caught in the middle, some parents arguing against inclusion and some parents arguing for inclusion of diverse materials. Organizations like the education associations, the LGBTQ+ community, and rights organizations are advocates for inclusion (of everything they embrace).

Senator Aument, Lancaster County, has introduced SB7 in an effort to resolve this conflict in one area—explicit sexual material in public schools. See the senator’s summary of the need for this legislation. [Parental Control of Student Exposure to Sexually Explicit Content in Schools. Aument Senate Co-Sponsorship Memoranda, State website.](#)

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This bill allows parents to opt-in to allow their students to see the sexualized material. (That is opposite from an opt-out procedure.) See the senator’s 3-page bill. [PA Senate Bill 7. October 18, 2023, printing. State website.](#)

*Observations:* (a) *Opposition to a bill like SB7 further demonstrates why Christian parents and conservative parents seek an alternative to public schools. (b) This bill has now been approved in committee on a party-line vote. It demonstrates a difference between the two major political parties in Pennsylvania.*

Parenthetically, a similar problem is evident in public libraries. Conscientious parents have been increasingly aware of the need to supervise their children’s use of library resources. Diverse voices have described the American Library Association as increasingly liberal in philosophy, but in this past year, the American Library Association elected a new president, one that many are terming to be a radical. See a sample article. [Top librarian calls ‘Marxist lesbian’ tweet backlash ‘regrettable’. August 7, 2023. NBC News.](#) Among other views, this president is leading an aggressive fight against any/all banning of books in libraries. The net effect of the ALA position is that they believe all books should be available to patrons of all ages, regardless of parental wishes or community values.

## Governor Shapiro in the News

As the PA Attorney General, Gov. Shapiro was quite aggressive in publicly highlighting how he investigated, prosecuted, and promoted legislation related to alleged sexual improprieties by Roman Catholic clergy. It had the subtle characteristics of a quest for votes (and it is widely believed that he aspires to federal office). It has been said that his handling of alleged sexual improprieties by leaders in the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion had the same characteristics.

Now, Gov. Shapiro has been widely criticized for harboring a key staff member accused of sexual impropriety, including by voices from diverse positions. Here are two samples:

[Top Pa. Senate leader attacks Gov. Josh Shapiro over his handling of the sexual harassment allegations involving a top aide. The Philadelphia Inquirer.](#)

[Gov. Josh Shapiro’s office quietly settled sexual harassment allegation against top aide \(including a confidentiality clause\). Spotlight PA.](#)

KCEA is a loose association of Bible-believing churches and Christian schools in PA uniting under a common banner for the furtherance of a common goal: the protection and promotion of Christian education as a philosophy and methodology of training our youth.

The Association is a faith ministry that serves Bible-believing ministries in Pennsylvania. Churches and other ministries are encouraged to support the Association with regular prayer and financial gifts. Dr. Allen Harris, President. Rev. Ross Ritchey, Vice-President. Mr. Michael Boole, Secretary-Treasurer. Dr. Theodore Clater, Executive Director.