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**CHURCH-BASED
CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION:
CREATING A
NEW PARADIGM**

**PART II:
ADULTHOOD**

INTRODUCTION:

This is the second part of a two-part series on church-based Christian education.¹ I did not plan to write either of these papers, because my focus has been more on theological education and missions. That still is my central passion. However, over the last three years, I have been thrust into areas that I now see I should have been giving far more attention to all along. I was actually working in these areas, with my own kids and in counseling others within our church, trying to establish them in the faith, but not at all with the rigor of these last three years. This paper (as did the first one on childhood and adolescence) has its own little story.

Now and then, when I am teaching a class, carrying on a conversation, or writing a course, a little question surfaces in the back of my mind, causing mild frustration. It occasionally would happen late Saturday nights as I was nearing the end of my message preparations. I knew the second it appeared that I was in for an “all-nighter.” The question told me that my whole message was on the wrong course, and that I had to rebuild it from scratch. That type of question surfaced when teaching BILD’s *Ministry Priorities and Personal Management* course a few years ago. I was trying to get all of us who were taking the course to see that all of our life goals could fit under the categories of individual household and the household of God. I remember very well—Don Erickson, one of our church leaders,

¹ This is actually the fifth of a six-part series now titled *Paradigms for the Post Modern Church*. The first paper, *Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm*, was delivered almost four years ago at the annual conference for the North American Professors for Christian Education (NAPCE). It was addressed mostly to Christian education professors and academic deans of graduate schools of theology, and in one sense, was seminal to the entire discussion of the five articles. It called the church to a whole new educational paradigm for educating its leaders. The companion to this paper, *Church-Based Christian Education: Creating a New Paradigm—Part I: Childhood and Adolescence*, was delivered at the 1995 Christian School Leadership Summit in Colorado Springs. The three together form a fairly complete treatise toward a comprehensive church-based Christian education paradigm. The remaining two were delivered at BILD-International’s annual conferences, in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The first, *Church-Based Missions: Creating a New Paradigm*, dealt with sweeping changes occurring in missions in breaking free from the residual effects of the colonial missions model, and the second, *Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm* dealt with the need to do theology afresh in culture, building upon a biblical theology base. The final paper in the paradigms series, entitled *Church-Based Hermeneutics: Creating a New Paradigm*, will be delivered in February, 1997 in Phoenix at the BILD-International annual international conference, and will deal with post-modern hermeneutical issues, and implications of electronic publishing on the life of the church. All place the local church at the center of the discussion. These can be ordered from LearnCorp, 1835 Meadow Glen Rd., Ames, IA 50014. Phone: 515-292-6810/Fax: 515-292-1933.

questioned how we could spend so much of our time in our lifework, and not even have a category for it. I think I knew then subconsciously that a new major problem on this church-based paradigm curve was surfacing and demanding to be solved. I had no idea how God would go about resurfacing that question, and bringing this major paradigm to the forefront of my thought. Only by being thrust out into the world of work more directly was I forced to think through the problem of the separation of our faith and church work, from the everyday work world of the committed believer. Only then was I motivated to begin rethinking the whole issue of adult Christian education. But before we begin building the paradigm boundaries of adult Christian education—which will lead to a total redesign—let’s look at the general paradigm shifts that are taking place in education and business today.

PARADIGM SHIFTS IN EDUCATION AND BUSINESS:

The whole world of work is changing. Jobs as we know them are taking a radically different shape as we move from an industrial society of large corporations, organizations, and institutions to a downsized, ever-changing, technological society. One of the changes which will affect us most directly is the concept of everyone *having a job*—a traditional, full-time, with-benefits job. Two recent books have focused specifically on this part of the rapidly changing world. Both possess titles as radical as their contents:

- *JobShift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs*, by William Bridges (1994)
- *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post Market Era*, by Jeremy Rifkin (1995)

Bridges very powerfully argues that we are entering a post-job era, which will bring about change as great as the shift from the pre-industrial to the industrial society. The concept of the full-time job paradigm—regular hours, job descriptions, career paths, steady wages, raises, benefit packages, along with idioms such as *that’s not my job, get a good job, out of a job, just protecting my job*—is a relatively new idea. It replaced the long-standing idea of the pre-industrial world, which viewed the world of work from a totally different framework. Work in the pre-industrial world was focused on the quality and reputation of one’s work—doing good work, being responsible and industrious, being a skilled artisan, or a diligent worker. The focus was on the idea of *doing jobs* rather than having a job.

“Doing all your work for one employer, at a regular place and time, for a single salary, and containing your work life within a single entity called a job—these are ideas that were brand-new in the nineteenth century. Before that, everyone had a composite career, although no one talked about such a commonplace fact. It would be hard to imagine Thomas Jefferson (planter, architect,

statesman, writer, inventor) and Benjamin Franklin (printer, postmaster, statesman, humorist, scientist) holding down jobs.”²

Bridges predicts a new era—the post-job era—that in many ways will resemble aspects of the pre-industrial paradigm, plus all the possibilities of the post-industrial, technological society. Mostly because of enormous technological changes, the *job paradigm* will eventually break down in this era and a new framework will emerge. Even though the concept of the job paradigm is less than 200 years old, it is difficult for us to even imagine not holding a traditional job. The future will look something like the pre-industrial era since people will do many jobs rather than holding a single job. Some will say that this is only alarmist thinking, that the future is not likely to experience such a radical shift. Both Bridges and Rifkin, along with authors like Charles Handy and Peter Drucker, make a powerful case for the fact that we are in a time of great change. Listen to a few of their assertions:

Bridges:

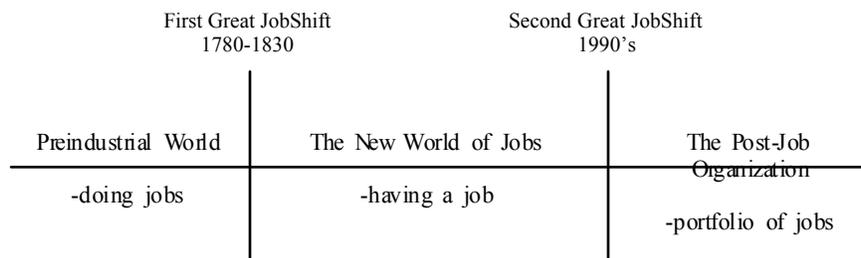
“Because conventional jobs inhibit flexibility and speedy response to the threats and opportunities of a rapidly changing market, many organizations are turning over even their most important tasks to temporary and contract workers or to external vendors. That way, when conditions change outside the organization, there is no turf guardian inside whose livelihood depends on not changing how things are done.”³

“Even after the job became a dominant work paradigm, upper-and lower-class people kept their composite careers□ the latter because they needed them to survive, and the former because their mix of

Figure 1

JobShift: Entering the Post-Job Era

Adapted from William Bridges



² *JobShift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs*, William Bridges, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1994, p.115.

³ *JobShift*, p.27.

leisure, social responsibility, and wide experience gave them multiple points of concern and influence. Only the middle class gave up the composite career, and today even they are returning to it.”⁴

Rifkin:

“In the past, when new technologies replaced workers in a given sector, new sectors always emerged to absorb displaced laborers. Today, all three of the traditional sectors of the economy—agriculture, manufacturing, and service—are experiencing technological displacement, forcing millions onto the unemployment rolls. The only new sector is made up of a small elite of entrepreneurs, scientists, technicians, computer programmers, educators, and consultants. While this sector is growing, it is not expected to absorb more than a fraction of the hundreds of millions who will be eliminated in the next several decades in the wake of revolutionary advances in the information and communication sciences.”⁵

“To begin with, more than 75 percent of the labor force in the most industrious nations engage in work that is little more than simple repetitive tasks. Automated machinery, robots, and increasingly sophisticated computers can perform many, if not most of these jobs. In the United States alone, that means that in the years ahead more than 90 million jobs in the labor force of 124 million are potentially vulnerable to replacement by machines Reengineering is sweeping through the corporate community Companies are quickly restructuring their organizations to make them computer friendly Michael Hammer, a former MIT professor and prime mover in the restructuring of the workplace, says that reengineering typically results in the loss of more than 40 percent of the jobs in a company and can lead to as much as 75 percent reduction in the given company’s workforce. Middle management is particularly vulnerable to job loss from reengineering, Hammer estimates that up to 80 percent of those engaged in middle-management tasks are susceptible to elimination By the time the first stage of reengineering runs its course, some studies predict loss of up to 25 million jobs in the private sector labor force that currently totals around 90 million Anderson Consulting Company, one of the world’s largest corporate restructuring firms, estimates that in just one service industry, commercial banking and thrift institutions, reengineering will mean a loss of 30 to 40 percent of the jobs over the next seven years. That translates into nearly 700,000 jobs eliminated.”⁶

⁴ *JobShift*, p. 115.

⁵ *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, Jeremy Rifkin, G.P. Putmans Sons, New York, New York, 1995, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁶ *The End of Work*, pp. 5-9.

Charles Handy estimates that less than half of the workforce will be in “proper” jobs by the beginning of the twenty-first century,⁷ and many will be working out of their homes.

Handy:

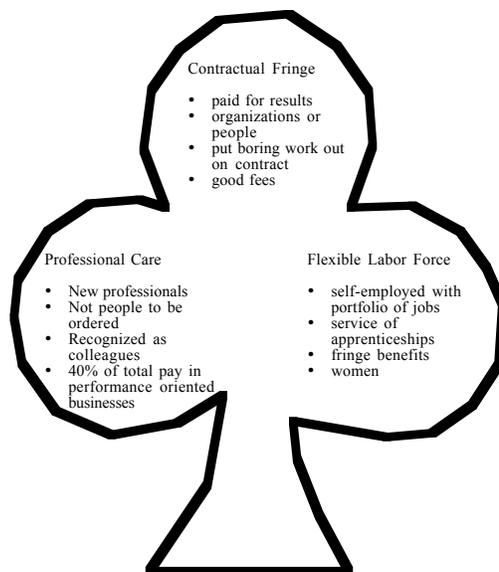
“By some estimates, one-quarter of the working population will be working from home by the end of the century. From home is different than from at home. The home is the base not the prison. We can leave it. There will be organized work clubs, work centers, meeting rooms, and conference centers. We shall not be confined to our terminal in our little back room; there will be people to meet, places to go to, team projects, and group assignments. I work from home myself. I go out from it nearly every day, but almost always to a different place. It is not a lonely life.”⁸

Handy goes on to envision this restructuring of work in the form of a new type of organization, which he calls the shamrock organization. He sees three primary types of work arrangements: the professional core (which parallels Rifkin’s elite information sector professionals), who are at the core of the new global organizations; the contractual fringe, who contract out their work; and the flexible labor force, who require some of the greatest creativity to thrive well in this new era. See figure 2.

Figure 2

The Shamrock Organization

By Charles Handy



⁷ *The Future of Work: A Guide to a Changing Society*, Charles Handy, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1984.

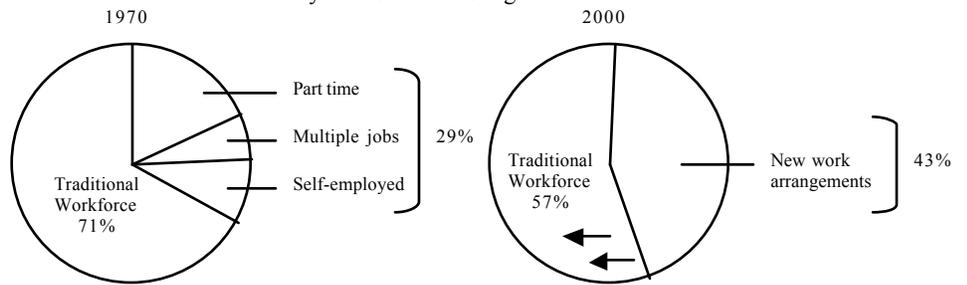
⁸ *The Age of Unreason*, Charles Handy, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 1989, p.178.

In their book, *Upsizing the Individual in the Downsized Organization*, Johansen and Swigart help us visualize, with statistics, the emerging reality of the new era which is quickly permeating the workforce (Figure 3). New work arrangements as they call them, will increasingly require a different approach from getting an education followed by a traditional job one with regular hours, job descriptions, and benefit packages.⁹

Figure 3

Growth of the Flexible Work Force

By Johnson & Swigart



How are we to look at this whole situation? For some who are unprepared or unaware of the coming post-job era, it is viewed as a cruel and ruthless process which disrupts and often destroys lives. For others, it is viewed as a time of tremendous opportunity.

These realities are coming to pass even faster than the prophets themselves predicted. An extensive seven-part series appeared March 3-9, 1996, in *The New York Times* entitled “The Downsizing of America.” It provided a massive amount of information, which confirms the shifts predicted by Handy, Bridges, and Rifkin, and provided a look at some personal tragedies of lives and towns. This series can be downloaded free, including charts and pictures (at www.nytimes.com under Job Market / Special Report / Downsizing America).

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Some of you in non-industrialized societies (much of the Two-Thirds world) may be asking how this applies to you? A very interesting and powerful theory is beginning to emerge concerning how this great jobshift will affect developing countries. Remember Joel Barker’s observations in his video *The Business of Paradigms?* “When a paradigm shifts, everything goes back to zero.” That is what many believe is happening. The jobshift is driven by the fast pace in which we are moving into the age of technology. To be successful we do not need large institutional facilities, especially things like office buildings and all of their trappings. Huge corporations like IBM and AT & T no longer need large centralized facilities. One of the problems is that the West has them and will be paying for them for a long time. The developing countries do not. The

⁹ *Upsizing the Individual in the Downsized Organization*, by Robert Johansen and Rob Swigart, Addison Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, MA, 1994, p. 64.

irony is that many feel the developing countries do not need to go fully through the industrial age to get to the technological age, but instead they can jump right over it. In fact, all of the institutional paradigms of the West, produced in the industrial age, may slow down its transition into the new age, but the developing countries are free to build from the ground up and at a much faster pace. Joel Kotkin, in his groundbreaking book *Tribes: How Race, Religion and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy*, has demonstrated quite convincingly that a new global economy is emerging, and that huge international networks are being built. Most of them are from the Third World, especially India and the Pacific Rim. All hold to their traditional values, but are not encumbered by the *baggage* of Western industrial institutions.

The same thing is true in education. Our Western institutions are slowing us down. Not so in developing countries—unless of course they feel the need for these same archaic monoliths of culture for some ironic identity reason. Now let's look briefly at new paradigms in education.

NEW PARADIGMS IN EDUCATION

Amidst the constant and dramatic changes in the corporate world—re-engineering, jobshift realities—it is easy to miss similar global changes in education. Business has bottom lines which bring about changes much earlier than in the educational system, which is funded by governments and communities. But radical changes are taking place in education as well. One of the best treatments on the magnitude of these cultural shifts and their implications on education, is set forth by Alan M. Thomas in his book *Beyond Education: A New Perspective on Society's Management of Learning*.¹⁰ Thomas develops his argument that the formal educational system as we know it today arose from the industrial society, where uniformity was the standard and the need of the times. He believes that the educational system, as a management of learning system, is going to need to be restructured or reengineered, just like the corporate world. We need a new management of learning system that is compatible with the emerging technological society we are entering. Corporations need to become learning organizations;¹¹ schools need to become lifelong learning centers to fit the new educational needs of a changing society. Thomas suggests that the shift is inevitable, and that it can be made most smoothly by educational institutions that attach themselves to learning organizations.

¹⁰ *Beyond Education: New Perspectives on Society's Management of Learning*, by Alan M. Thomas (Jossey-Bass, 1991).

¹¹ The "bible" of the learning organization books, one of the most influential business books of the 90's is *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*, by Peter M. Senge (Doubleday, 1990). One of the most helpful for its numerous examples of learning center models—over 30 major examples—is *Corporate Quality Universities: Lessons in Building a World Class Work Force*, by Jeanne C. Meister (Irwin, 1994), published in association with the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). And finally, Robert Aubrey, who wrote *Savoir Faire Savoir* (Knowing How to Know), winner of the prestigious University of Paris Prix Dauphine for the best business book of 1991, recently co-authored *Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations*, by Robert Aubrey and Paul M. Cohen (Jossey-Bass, 1995).

Careful perusal of contemporary literature¹² on societal and cultural change surfaces a general sketch of this shift, from the formal education paradigm, developed within the industrial society, to the emerging learning center paradigm of the technological society. See figure 4. A grasp of these developing patterns is extremely helpful for guiding us in strategically planning our educational forms for the future. These parallels are by no means exhaustive, but rather occur frequently in the literature and the early models.

Figure 4

<u>Waning Paradigm</u>	<u>Emerging Paradigm</u>
1. Formal, institutional structures	1. Nonformal, flexible structures
2. Non-profit funding	2. For-profit discipline
3. Testing and degree system	3. Competencies and portfolios
4. National vision	4. Community leadership
5. Institutional authority	5. Partnerships□ parents, business
6. For service preparation dominates	6. In service preparation idealized
7. In-service training marginalized	7. In-service education integrated
8. Education for the young	8. Life development is the focus
9. Institutional library resource centers	9. Community-based resource centers

All of this means that we must change how we think about our education. We can no longer assume that we can go to a university for four years and expect that knowledge to serve us for many years in a career. Aubrey and Cohen, in their book *Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations* make an astounding statement. They claim that knowledge today has a four-year half-life. That means that one half of our working knowledge today will be obsolete in four years, just in time to graduate from college. We have to change our mindset from four years of education for a lifetime of work, to a strategy of serious lifelong learning. Learning and the workplace must be wed as never before in history.

All of these changes have huge implications for the Christian education of adults. It is necessary for us to build new ways—in fact an entirely new paradigm—for educating Christian adults. What would be the elements of such a paradigm?

¹² Alvin Toffler's trilogy is by far the most comprehensive: *Future Shock* (Bantam, 1970), *The Third Wave*, (Bantam, 1980), and *PowerShift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century* (Bantam, 1990). Especially note chapter 18, "Education in the Future Tense" in *Future Shock*. Also very helpful are two books by Peter Drucker, *The New Realities: In Government and Politics, In Economics and Business, In Society and World View* (Harper & Row, 1989), especially note Section IV: "The New Knowledge Society," chapters 12-16, and in *The Post-Capitalist Society* (HarperBusiness, 1993) note section III, "Knowledge," chapters 10-12. Finally, see *The Age of Unreason*, by Charles Handy (Harvard Business School Press, 1990) especially chapter 8, "Re-Inventing Education."

ELEMENTS OF A NEW PARADIGM: CHURCH-BASED CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

PREMISE#1: Contemporary Christian education of adults is fragmented in that it does not take seriously an integrated, lifelong learning approach, and does not take seriously the lifework of each believer.

Christian education for adults is just as fragmented as it is for children. It, as well, is fragmented at two levels. First, there is the disassociation of our adult Christian education and our lifework. And second, there is an almost complete lack of serious, integrated ordered learning available for adults, unless you choose to go to a seminary.

1. *Fragmentation of Christian education and our lifework*

If you were to mention to the average believer in our churches today that he or she ought to engage in a serious, disciplined study of theology, he would probably reply something like this, “Why, I am not planning on becoming a minister.” How did this happen? It developed as we professionalized the ministry, and made the study of theology an academic discipline rather than an orientation of the soul for the purpose of acquiring wisdom, which all men need regardless of their lifework. The history of this development was masterfully traced in Edward Farley’s *Theologia: The Unity and Fragmentation of Theological Education* (which I treated in earlier papers). Theological study became synonymous with academia and preparation for the profession of “full-time ministry.” Once one decided not to pursue “full-time ministry,” the study of theology was no longer needed and serious ordered learning for adults was dropped. What was once understood to be a discipline that all men needed regardless of their work—enabling them to do their lifework with greater skill—became irrelevant. The professionalization of ministry is not the only reason, but probably the most all encompassing. Farley specifically drives home this point in a chapter entitled, “Can Christian Education Be Theological Education?” taken from his book *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and University*. See the quote under “The Problem Defined” in figure 5, “The Problem Visualized: A Fragmented Christian Education Approach.”

2. *Fragmentation of adult education curricula.*

The professionalization of the ministry and theology has worked itself out in devastating ways within the life of the church. One of the most devastating has been the fragmentation of curricula itself. We no longer have a disciplined faith development track for Christian adults in our churches. Instead we have adult Sunday schools, Christian how-to books and seminars, Christian radio and small group study guides designed to be lead by facilitators who are usually without an ordered didache themselves.

We must develop an approach that takes seriously the need for ordered learning among adults. It must be disciplined, accurate, and attainable. We must convince every Christian within our churches of the need for becoming established in the core truths of the faith, and for beginning a

lifelong learning approach to the Christian life which will lead toward a mastery of the Scriptures. This disciplined ordered learning cannot be disassociated with life and work. The development of our faith must relate in every way to the work—the good occupations—to which God has called us (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:14).

PREMISE #2: Christian education for adults must be church-based at its core

We have used the term *church-based* throughout this paradigm series; indeed it appears in every title. Each time we try to put a nuance to the idea so that it might be understood more fully. As we examine adult education, we see that the church is again marginalized. The only serious theological ordered learning for young adults is Bible college, again which is not at all integrated with churches. In fact, outside of a Bible department and weekly chapel, there is very little difference between Bible colleges and private colleges.

Any serious ordered learning within the church is almost always found in the materials of highly organized para-church ministries with powerful agendas of their own. The problem is not in using material which fits our adult education goals as a church, but that the material is written in the context of a whole ministry which takes place outside the life of the church, on a different agenda from the church, and usually just gives a token nod to local church involvement in the materials. They are being written by people who do not understand the life of the local church as presented in the New Testament.

Again we will ask the question, what exactly do we mean by church-based? Primarily we mean that the local church is at the center of our paradigm, our ministry models, and our year-in and year-out practice of the ministry itself—whether that be missions, leadership training, counseling and shepherding, Christian education, or any other major ministry enterprise. The image *church-housed* versus *church-based*, which I discussed in my theological education paper, applies here as well. Too often in our churches today, adult education programs are church-housed programs of para-church ministries. Their materials, which are not philosophically compatible with the church, become imbedded into our programs and the lives of our people for lack of our own well-thought-out and integrated adult Christian education program. The following definitions, slightly adapted from the first Christian education article, will serve as our working definitions.

Church-Housed: The adult education program is housed in the church building, but is really a philosophical hodge-podge of para-church training programs and material. There may be an occasional specialized class taught by a church member who is particularly motivated in one area but no serious integrated adult education plan.

The Problem Visualized: A Fragmented Christian Education Approach

Figure 5

The Reality Visualized

Learning as a Child	Learning as a Young Adult	Learning as an Adult	Learning as an Older Adult
<p>Experience Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parental lectures market-driven Sunday school shallow family devotions fragmented Christian school <p>Serious, integrated ordered learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> none (nothing available such as the Jewish training of children and bar-mitzvahs) 	<p>Experience Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fragmented Christian college fragmented youth programs and adult Sunday school discipleship programs Christian seminars <p>Serious, integrated ordered learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> none (nothing available unless you decide to go to seminary) 	<p>Experience Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fragmented adult Sunday school how-to books Christian seminars religious radio programs <p>Serious, integrated ordered learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nothing available (except for seminary graduates - D. Min) 	<p>Experience Today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> why bother, not needed

The Problem Defined

"Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian learning - to historical-critical studies of the Bible, to the content and structures of the great doctrines, to two thousand years of classic works on the Christian life, to the basic disciplines of theology, biblical languages and Christian ethics? Why do bankers, lawyers, farmers, physicians, homemakers, scientists, salespeople, managers of all sorts, people who carry out all kinds of complicated tasks in their work and home, remain at a literalist, elementary school level in their religious understanding? How is it that high school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture? How is it possible one can attend or even teach in a Sunday School for decades and at the end of that time lack the interpretive skills of someone who has taken three or four weeks in an introductory course in Bible at a university or seminary?"

Edward Farley, in The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University (Fortress, 1998)

The Solution Proposed

The church must take seriously its responsibility to fully train believers in their faith - in the whole counsel of God, if they are to be expected to make significant contributions in the cause of Christ in the world and work in which they live. Individual households must take seriously the ordered learning of their children.

Church-Based: The adult education program is integrated with the life of the church and the needs of the adults in the church to be established in their faith, in their families, in the church family and in the world community, living productive lives and involved in good occupations

There are only two basic concepts that need to be grasped in order to set the basic integration framework in place. They were presented in the first paper just as they are here. The *first concept* is that the individual household—the family—is the basic, core institution of the Christian education process. The overall responsibility of the *paideia*—the discipline and instruction, Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:18-2—of children is given to parents, especially fathers. These passages are part of the “household texts” of the New Testament epistles, which were a common form in Greek literature of the day.¹³ This is consistent with the Hebrew model and can be seen in such passages as Deuteronomy 6:6,7 and wisdom literature passages such as Proverbs 1-9 and 31.

The *second concept* is that the household of God—the local church family—is an extended household, a family of families. That is not just a metaphor, but a real truth. This can be seen throughout the New Testament epistles, but is probably laid out the clearest in the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. The organizing principle of these epistles is stated in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, where it states that the local church is the pillar and support of the truth, and that God has given instructions on how a community should order itself, just as He has for individual families. An example of how real God sees this family of families is this: He gives instructions that individual families are to take care of their own widows, and if they can't, the local church family is to care for the widows in their midst who are in need (1 Timothy 5:8ff). These epistles are full of instructions from the assumed framework that the church is a family of families—a true community.

Building upon these fundamental concepts, the local church organizes community enterprises however it wishes, under the oversight of a council of household heads, referred to in the epistles as pastors, elders, church leaders, etc. The problem today is that most leaders in churches are not well established themselves (refer back to Farley's quote in figure 2). They were not part of a generation that was seriously trained in the core teachings of the apostles, in biblical theology, in the classics of the Christian faith, and in how to deal biblically with contemporary cultural problems. Consequently, they cannot put together a high-level, well-ordered, integrated, and lifelong adult Christian education program. Our programs, rather than being church-based, are in reality a philosophical and theological cafeteria. Our churches, rather than being a unified family, with one mind striving together for the progress of the gospel, are often really made up of theologically and philosophically incompatible fragments sewn

¹³ Several early church scholars dealt extensively with the household texts of the pastoral epistles. The most useful at this point is *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, by David C. Verner (Scholars Press, 1983). Verner demonstrates convincingly that 1 Timothy 3:14-16 is the organizing center of the pastoral epistles, and that Paul understood himself to be giving “household guidelines” for local churches, just as he gave “household guidelines” for individual families in Ephesians 5:18-6:4.

together by a building, a Sunday service, a few close friends, and the particular para-church programs that we like.

Whatever our program, it must respect the household—the house order God has set forth—which few of our contemporary ministry paradigms do. Rarely, if ever, have I seen a comprehensive model which fully integrates the serious adult Christian education each believer needs with his or her lifework, and in a manner that is philosophically and theologically consistent. There is a tremendous need for an integrated model. We desperately need an overall framework.

PREMISE #3: Christian education for adults must be wisdom-based throughout its infrastructure.

As in the first Christian education paper for children, once we assume the church-based premise—that the local church is the context for building an integrated Christian education program—we then have to ask from a biblical theology vantage point, where is the best place to begin building the infrastructure of an adult education program? The answer is our education literature—the wisdom literature.

Two things emerge from the wisdom literature, which apply to building an adult education program. First, education is lifelong. Wisdom literature calls for a lifelong commitment to the pursuit of wisdom. Second, it fully integrates our lifework, at every stage of our lives. Let's look at these two things in order:

First, from a wisdom perspective, adult education involves the lifelong pursuit of wisdom. Ancient wisdom literature gets right to the heart of this point. It calls for every individual to become committed to the lifelong pursuit of wisdom. Without this commitment, right from the very early stages of our lives, it is impossible to live a skillful life. The essence of wisdom's call to a lifelong pursuit of wisdom is this:

One leading a skillful life is developing a habit of lifelong learning, and consistently applying and integrating what is being learned, which leads to the development of character.

This is the essence of education. Listen to the following call for wisdom, by a father, to a son emerging into adulthood:

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;
Love her and she will watch over you.
The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom;
And with all your acquiring, get understanding. Proverbs 4:5-7

This lifelong pursuit is to continue throughout adulthood. Proverbs 1:1-7 paints a lifelong picture—the youth (naïve) need wisdom, and the wise need to become wiser. So whatever our strategy, it must encompass the whole span of life. (See wisdom chart). There is also great precedence in Jewish

culture based on the wisdom literature. In the Talmud, finalized around 400 AD, in “The Sayings of the Fathers,” it talks of the “ages of man”:

5	years is for reading (Scripture);
10	for Misnah (the laws);
13	for Commandments (Bar Mitzvah, moral responsibility);
15	for Gemara (Talmudic discussions, abstract reasoning);
18	for Hupa (wedding canopy);
20	for seeking a livelihood (pursuing an occupation);
30	for attaining full strength (“Koah”);
40	for understanding;
50	for giving counsel;
60	for becoming an elder (wisdom, old age);
70	for white hair;
80	for Gevurah (new, special strength of old age);
90	for being bent under the weight of the years;
100	for being as if almost dead and passed away from the world. ¹⁴

Second, wisdom literature paints a picture of education, which fully integrates with lifework. Let’s examine the lifework idea in the context of a normal life span, beginning with childhood and adolescence:

1. Wisdom’s Focus in Childhood and Adolescence: Developing a Good Work Ethic and Being a Responsible Steward

The emphasis for the young is on a good work ethic, personal discipline, and learning to be a good steward of resources—possessions, money, etc. Listen to the following proverbs which address youth in one form or another:

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.
He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely,
But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully 10:3,4

I passed by the field of the sluggard,
And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense;
And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles,
Its surface was covered with nettles,
And its stone wall was broken down.
When I saw, I reflected upon it;
I looked, *and* received instruction.
“A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest,”
Then your poverty will come *as* a robber,
And your want like an armed man. 24:30-34

At an early age, it is important that we learn how to do diligent work, even when we do not feel like it. Good discipline habits and a work ethic must come early. Our children must learn to work hard in

¹⁴ This particular arrangement was taken from *The Seasons of a Man’s Life*, by Daniel Levinson (Ballantine, 1978), p. 325.

season, and work hard at the everyday things that keep property and possessions working well and looking sharp. This is all part of the wisdom tradition. Today, our children are entertained through childhood and adolescence, rather than taught to do helpful and meaningful work. We cannot expect our children to all of a sudden just birth a good work ethic when they turn 18. Wisdom's exhortation: it must be modeled for them and built into them.

2. Wisdom's Focus in Early Adulthood: Working Hard and Building Financial Foundations

The emphasis in early adulthood must be on working hard and building good financial foundations. Listen to the following proverbs, which have particular relevance to young adults:

An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning,
Will not be blessed in the end. 20:21

He who tills the land will have plenty of food,
But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.
28:19

In all labor there is profit
But mere talk leads only to poverty. 14:23

Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man,
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. 20:17

Prepare your work outside,
And make it ready for yourself in the field;
Afterwards, then, build your house. 24:27

There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more,
And there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results
only in want.
The generous man will be prosperous,
And he who waters will himself be watered. 11:24,25

It is crucial at this stage in life to lay good foundations based upon hard work—the earlier the better. It is easy to go after too much talk□ things of great interest but which do not help lay these foundations□ and put too much emphasis on a comfortable lifestyle. What we need early on, are good financial foundations. We must avoid trying to accumulate wealth in a hurry, creating a comfortable home too quickly, and spending too much time learning and talking about our future work rather than doing it. In our modern Western culture, with our preoccupation with formal education, we often do not get to any significant work until well into our early adulthood stage, and then often with considerable debt. A good work ethic should land us on the other side of any formal schooling, with very little, if any, debt. In light of the four-year half-life of knowledge, our formal schooling should be put into perspective. The ability to learn anywhere ought to be far more carefully wed to our actual work, and our plan for regular lifelong learning given more serious attention. Except in a few

professions, college education offers far less security than it used to, and in many cases, far less than someone who has a passion for his work, combined with a passion to learn. Very early in our lives, we must also develop a generous spirit, and a habit of giving to others to our community of faith and to good causes. We can never expect to prosper without that kind of spirit.

3. Wisdom's Focus in Middle Adulthood: Prospering in Work and Deepening Financial Foundations

The emphasis in middle adulthood must be on the most prosperous elements of our work, and on deepening our financial foundations. The following proverbs have particular relevance to those in middle adulthood:

By wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
And by knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches. 24:3,4

Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will stand before kings,
He will not stand before obscure men. 22:29

The plan of the diligent will lead to advantage,
But everyone who is hasty comes to poverty. 21:5

In this stage, we begin to work more wisely. We have had enough experience to know where our abilities lie, and enough experience in work and life to focus on areas where we are most likely to make the greatest impact. The more skill that we develop in our significant areas of work, the more likely we will stand before people who want our skills, and who will be in a position to move us into areas where we can have a greater impact, and consequently enjoy greater prosperity. The house that is prosperous though, is not just one which is lucky. According to the wisdom model, we must be developing wisdom, and using that wisdom to build a successful plan. That will give us the advantage we need. In these jobshift days, we need to be very wise. So often people at this stage are laid off by their employers. Even though they have a vast amount of experience, they have not made themselves irreplaceable. First of all, they demand much more money than those who are just starting out. Maybe they have not kept up with technology, nor kept learning in general. They have not looked for ways to reengineer themselves within the company, or others ways to market their skills and abilities. Those who are following the wisdom tradition will recognize that to prosper at this stage, they will have to become very skillful in their work, and very wise in their choices, if their household is going to prosper.

4. Wisdom Focus in Later Adulthood: Mentoring, Writing and Enabling Others

The emphasis in later adulthood must be mentoring, writing, and enabling others. These last proverbs have particular relevance to those in later adulthood:

A righteous man who walks with integrity,
How blessed are his sons after him. 20:7

A gray head is a crown of glory,
It is found in the way of righteousness. 16:31

The glory of young men is their strength,
And the honor of old men is their gray hair. 20:29

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. 13:22

In the wisdom model, those in later adulthood have the greatest opportunity to use their lifework and its fruit to its fullest advantage. In younger days, glory is in working hard, in strength. In later adulthood, glory is in great wisdom—skill in using our lifework and its resultant prosperity to enable and empower others to invest their lives in purposeful and prosperous ways. The Hebrew concept of gray hair is great strength of mind, of perspective, as opposed to the great physical strength of young men. The man who follows the wisdom way is one who will honor those closest to him; will see his prosperity in its fullest form following him and resting on his children; and will be in a life position that enables him to leave an inheritance even to his children's children. In this changing world of work, we must be motivated to build our contemporary education and lifework strategies firmly upon the foundation of the wisdom tradition.

It should be noted that these are just a few of the work, education, and finance verses found in the book of Proverbs. There are literally scores of them relating to this subject. LearnCorp has created an extensive guide to the wisdom literature, especially Proverbs, which is entitled *the Fourth Generation Life Cycle System*. This is an excellent tool to guide you in your own lifework pursuits, and to use in building wisdom foundations into the lives of your children resulting in blessings to the fourth generation.

An adult education program that skillfully puts these two wisdom pillars together—lifelong learning and lifework focus—will bring a “Queen of Sheba” type of response by all observing today. The more she observed of Solomon's wisdom, the more she marveled.

Now we are in a position to construct a model based upon the New Testament understanding of the church as a family of families, and the Old Testament wisdom tradition—which together supply the essential elements of a biblical framework for adult Christian education.

**THE BASIC FRAMEWORK—CHURCH-BASED/WISDOM-BASED
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

THE BASIC FRAMEWORK

In building the framework, we are following very simple developmental divisions of early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later adulthood. These, we believe, are consistent with the wisdom literature model, and with sound contemporary developmental research.¹⁵ In figure 6, “A Church-Based/Wisdom-Based Christian Education Framework,” we have attempted to visualize a model which takes into account all the elements discussed up to this point—biblical data, contemporary research, and the paradigmatic changes of the cultural times.

In each division, we attempt to follow the emphasis of Scripture, both of the wisdom literature and the New Testament teaching on the centrality of the church. When both of these aspects are understood, it makes the developmental framework relatively easy to understand. The following is a description of the basic framework summarized into three core goals capturing the central task of each stage:

Early Adulthood:

I need to become well established in the core teaching of the faith, build a solid family, and lay solid lifework foundations.

Middle Adulthood:

I need to transition my children into adulthood, serve skillfully in the church, and focus on the main body of my lifework.

Later Adulthood

I need to leave a living heritage, be a resource to the community of faith, and fully complete my lifework.

¹⁵ This developmental framework is based on the work of Daniel Levinson in his famous book, *The Season's of a Man's Life* (Ballantine Books, 1973). Levinson is Jewish and it shows in his research.

A Church-Based\Wisdom-Based Christian Education FrameworkSM

Adulthood
Figure 6

17-22	35-45	57-65
<p>Early Adulthood</p> <p>“I need to become well established in the core teachings, build a solid family and lay solid lifework foundations”</p> <p>Life Development Portfolio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time line/SIMA • life development guides (early adulthood supplements) • strategic life plan <p>Curriculum Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character (basic training: family people, money, etc.) • ministry (core teachings) • education/work (core knowledge, work experience) <p>Life Development Learning Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • portfolio system • integrated courses & seminars • apprenticeships, mentoring system, learning networks • curriculum, resources & publications – newsletter/journal • computerized learning system & electronic library 	<p>Middle Adulthood</p> <p>“I need to transition my children into adulthood, serve skillfully in the church and focus on the main body of my lifework”</p> <p>Life Development Portfolio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeline • life development guides (middle adulthood supplements) • strategic life plan <p>Curriculum Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character (values development: purpose, crises, older children, etc) • ministry (biblical theology) • education/work (advanced knowledge, main body of work) 	<p>World Community Member</p> <p>“I need to leave a living heritage, be a resource to the community of faith and full complete my lifework”</p> <p>Life Development Portfolio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeline • life development guides (later adulthood supplements) • strategic life plan <p>Curriculum Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character (complex problems & tasks) • ministry (theology in culture) • education/work (integrative knowledge & crowning lifework)

Note: This all takes place in a health church-based context:

- Oversight of mature family heads, a team of elders
- Solid preaching & teaching
- Small group fellowships
- One another ministry, open use of spiritual gifts
- Older men/women mentors

Some may argue that specific evangelism training is needed directly in the framework. That may be, but it is assumed that becoming established in the core teaching implies an ability to share that faith with non-believers as the opportunity presents itself. It also assumes that establishing a family and faithfully fulfilling one's lifework will put a person in a daily life-on-life context for modeling and sharing his faith.

With these general brushstrokes in place, what are the core elements of a church-based/wisdom-based Christian education framework? Similar to the framework proposed in the previous article on Christian education for childhood and adolescence, we are proposing three core elements—a life development portfolio, a curricula framework, and a resource center approach. Let's look at each element in detail:

THE CORE ELEMENTS

1. *Life Development Portfolio*

The life development portfolio idea is designed around a few basic concepts. The most fundamental concept is that each individual must develop a personal strategy for lifelong learning, especially in this time of transition from an industrial to an information society. The portfolio system is designed to facilitate this process. It is built to support the following tenets:

- Each individual must take seriously the lifelong learning process.
- This process is developmental in nature□ we all move through basic stages in life.
- All aspects of our lives need to be integrated into one whole.
- Learning must not be confused with schooling□ learning being lifelong.
- Work is being redefined today, requiring each to build a portfolio of multiple services.
- Few tools are available to help us see our whole lives□ its stages and its different elements□ in one big picture, and then help us integrate them into one complete picture.
- Responsible parenting, and grand-parenting, demand a deep commitment to guiding the developmental process of our children.
- Responsible leadership demands facilitating the developmental process of those in our corporations, organizations, schools, and churches.

The portfolio, then, needs to be an integrative tool designed to guide us in developing and monitoring a lifelong learning strategy. It needs to be built around basic developmental stages, based in the great wisdom traditions, and backed up by the contemporary research of developmentalists such as Kohlberg and Piaget. It needs to be a comprehensive tool, built around several basic tools, such as a life development time line, which can easily be personalized and made as simple or complex as the user desires. It needs to be a place to keep track of our development, or perhaps, keep our development on track.

The concept goes beyond the individual. We must become a society of lifelong learners. A concept that has become very popular in the 1990's is "the learning organization." Organizations, schools, and other institutions must become learning organizations in order to survive and be fully productive in these changing times. In a sense, organizations have a life cycle of their own, and thus need a developmental strategy as well.

The need for life development portfolios: The need for a learning tool such as a life development portfolio can be seen from several angles. Our whole world is changing. New paradigms are emerging at phenomenal speeds in both business and education. Due to the rapid acceleration of the information, technological society, our education can be out of date before we finish the program we have entered. New skills are required almost daily to survive in the new work force which Peter Drucker has aptly named "knowledge workers."

We now have a rapidly expanding knowledge base available to us via the computer, modem, internet, and CDs. Huge corporate databases and university libraries are accessible from our living rooms. Society's new capital is fast becoming that of knowledge. We must learn how to carefully negotiate travel on this information highway so that we can safely and effectively get where we are going in our education, work, and most importantly, our personal lives.

This leads to the most important reason for a system such as the life development portfolio. Knowledge, facts, and information are not the substance from which success, skillful and fulfilling work, and a productive life are made. The skillful use of new knowledge in our work and life is absolutely essential. This is called wisdom, literally defined as "skill in living." We can have all the knowledge in the world at our fingertips, but if we have no purpose; if our work is not integrated into our lives in a balanced and meaningful way; if our children and grandchildren are not developing in a healthy and productive way; if our marriages and personal relationships are not healthy and satisfying; then all of this new knowledge capital is really counterfeit goods.

We need a tool□ a system□ to help guide us down this new information super highway in a skillful way. We must fully draw upon traditional wisdom's "wisdom path," keeping all elements of our life in balance and on a healthy developmental course, if we are to live healthy, productive, and meaningful lives.

Portfolios in education: The idea of folios, or portfolios in most research, has become a very important issue in education. This folio/portfolio issue in education is an issue of assessment. For a long time educators have been aware that we need far more than a grading system for assessing how we are progressing in formal educational programs. One of the most respected educational theorists, Howard Gardner of Harvard's prestigious Graduate School of Education, has long talked in his project Zero, of process-folios which can greatly aid in the development and assessment of children in the educational process. The Association for the Supervision of Curriculum

Development (ASCD) devoted an entire issue (May, 1992, www.ascd.org) of their *Educational Leadership* magazine to portfolio assessment in schools. One of the best summaries of the research of adult education is found in *Experiential Learning: A New Approach*, edited by Lewis Jackson and Rosemary Cafarella (Jossey-Bass, 1992), which is part of the brilliant *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* quarterly monograph series. It has two key chapters, one on building a folio and one on portfolio construction. The basic idea, is that one should develop a folio as he or she moves through a particular educational program or process, and construct a portfolio at different times along the way for the purpose of demonstrating levels of progress.

Portfolios in business: The concept of portfolios is not new to the business world. Businessmen have investment portfolios, artists and architects have portfolios of their work. As both work and education go through radical changes as we move into the information society, the concept is taking on new dimensions. In the *Age of Unreason*, Charles Handy calls for developing work and marriage portfolios, becoming what he calls “portfolio people.” If we are going to become knowledge workers—committed to the lifelong, continuous learning needed in the new technological society— as well as remain balanced in all areas of life, we must have a tool which is wisdom-based, and oriented to help coordinate our needed learning with all areas of our lives. The portfolio system is designed to be just that sort of tool. Handy also talks about “portfolio work,” in which we build a portfolio of jobs and skills to use in marketing ourselves in the coming post-job era. Truly the concept of folios/portfolios has come of age, both in education and business.

Ingredients of a life development portfolio system: What sorts of things ought to be included in a life development portfolio system? When one takes into consideration the emphases of wisdom literature, the paradigm changes in education and business, and the overall paradigm changes in culture, the following ingredients surface:

- a grasp of God’s overall plan
- a personal vision for your lifework
- a timeline of your personal story
- an assessment of your unique gifts and abilities
- an understanding of your roles and responsibilities
- a strategic plan for your education and lifework
- an overall strategic life plan
- a way of learning and gaining wisdom day by day

The life development portfolio concept is the first core element of a new paradigm for Christian education. If we are going to build a serious, ordered learning, Christian education plan that is individualized, lifelong, and integrates with our general education and lifework, we need a tool like a life development portfolio. At LearnCorp we have developed the 7th *Priority Life Development Portfolio*. It builds all of the above elements into a comprehensive and flexible resource designed to serve as an engine to

building a comprehensive church-based/wisdom-based Christian education program.¹⁶

2. *The Life Development Curricula Framework*

It is important to have a sense of the overall areas of training needed before choosing a specific curricula. Too often we attempt to plug in programs, courses, seminars and sometimes an entire curriculum without having a sense of an overall training framework. The chart on the next page (figure 7 “Wisdom-Based Life Development Curriculum”) visualizes all of the key ingredients of a comprehensive curriculum for adult Christian education from a church-based/wisdom-based perspective which has been developed in the premise section of this paper. We have continued the curricula framework we began in the church-based Christian education article for childhood and adolescence. It would be helpful to read the curricula framework section in that article at the same time you read this to gain a full sense of the framework. The ideas here build on those in the first article.

Character development: In this section the wisdom literature sets the framework. We have designed it to parallel the developmental needs of each stage of adulthood. In early adulthood the focus is on the basic areas of life. The main clusters of life skills center around five major areas:

- character/habits of lifelong learning
- work, honesty and money
- home, wife, children
- people, work, conflicts
- community, authority, justice

The idea behind this stage is that we need to grasp all the basic areas of life in early adulthood. As life progresses, the issues and problems grow more complex. Thus in middle adulthood the focus moves from basic training to values development. This parallels the time in life when our children will be going through their teen years and we will need to be helping them develop their values. It is also the time, as we move through the middle of our lives, that our own values go through a time of re-evaluation. Thus the focus is on an understanding of the wisdom books which focus on meaning and purpose, processing life and its crises, and the cultivation of romantic love in marriage. As we move from middle to later adulthood, issues, challenges, and problems in our lives become even more complex. Still building on the earlier foundations, we now need to master the more complex clusters of the proverbs. This is not intended to be a course of

¹⁶ Call LearnCorp, 515-292-6810, for a free brochure on the 7th *Priority Life Development Portfolio* and seminar.

Wisdom-Based Life Development Curriculum Framework

Adulthood Figure

	Early Adulthood	Middle Adulthood	Late Adulthood
<p>(Parents)</p> <p>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT (Hebrew Wisdom Literature)</p> <p>Kohlberg</p>	<p>PROVERBS: BASIC TRAINING</p> <p>Theology of Proverbs: 1. Character/Habits of Lifelong Learning 2. Work, Honesty, Money 3. Home, Wife, Children 4. People, Words, Conflicts 5. Community, Authority, Justice (Over 65 basic category clusters)</p>	<p>WISDOM LITERATURE: VALUES DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Theology of Wisdom Literature: 1. Skill in Life Choices – Prov. 1-9 2. Skill in Processing Life (Meaning & Purpose) – Ecclesiastes 3. Skill in Romantic Love & Marriage – Song of Solomon 4. Skill in Processing Personal Crises – Job</p>	<p>WISDOM LITERATURE: COMPLEX PROBLEMS</p> <p>Specific Literature: 1. Proverbs 22:17-24:34 (Words of the Wise) 2. Proverbs 25:1-29:27 (2nd Collection Hezekiah's men) 3. Proverbs 30:1-33 (Word of Agur) 4. Ecclesiastes 5. Job</p>
<p>(Parents, Church)</p> <p>FAITH DEVELOPMENT (The Great Theological Education)</p> <p>Fowler</p>	<p>CORE TEACHINGS (First Principles)</p> <p>Basic Framework: 1. Individual 2. Family 3. Church 4. World (Establishing Series I)</p>	<p>BIBLICAL THEOLOGY (Mastery of Scriptures)</p> <p>Law Former Prophets Later Prophets Writings</p> <p>Gospels Acts & Pauline Epistles General Epistles Johannine Literature (Establishing Series II)</p>	<p>THEOLOGY IN CULTURE: (Mastery of Life)</p> <p>Biblical Theology (Framework from Scripture)</p> <p>Biblical Worldview and Practical Theology for Life and Ministry</p> <p>Cultural Worldviews and Issues</p>
<p>EDUCATION & LIFEWORX DEVELOPMENT (The Great Conversation)</p> <p>Paradigm: Thomas, Adler, Miller, Kolb, Handy, Bridges, Aubrey & Cohen</p> <p>Zwerling</p>	<p>CORE KNOWLEDGE & LIFEWORX</p> <p>Core Education Plan 1. Core Knowledge 2. Great Conversation I</p> <p>Basics of Lifework 1. Core lifework trainings 2. Building foundations of lifework (Working hard, gaining experience)</p>	<p>MASTER KNOWLEDGE & LIFEWORX</p> <p>Advance Education Plan 1. Advanced Knowledge 2. Great Conversation II</p> <p>Mastery of Lifework 1. Advanced lifework training 2. Main body of lifework (Convergence, working skillfully)</p>	<p>MASTER WISDOM & LIFEWORX</p> <p>Growing Education Plan 1. Integrative Knowledge 2. Contributions to the Great Conversation</p> <p>Platform of LifeWork others 1. Mentoring, writing & enabling Living Heritage 2. Crowning lifework 3. Possible 2nd body of lifework</p> <p>Lifelong Learning: 1. Ethical wills 2. Key mentoring relationships 3. Personal life message</p>

study as much as just pointing out the types of issues to major on in different stages of life. It is probably better to think of the wisdom aspect of this training as both progressive and cyclical. To help us cycle progressively through the wisdom literature as an infrastructure to our character and moral development, we have created an additional tool, which we call the *4th Generation Life Cycle System*. It is a tool to help us cycle through this wisdom process during the different stages of life. The idea behind this resource centers around the vision of beginning a process which will reverberate at least four generations into the future.¹⁷

Faith Development: In this section the major problem is fragmentation. There is no longer a sense of serious, ordered learning for Christian adults, no catechisms. J. I. Packer’s exhortation to the contemporary evangelical church is very appropriate at this juncture.

One great need today is a renewal of systematic Christian instruction-catechetical teaching for adults. It need not be called that, nor take the form of rigid drilling . . . but somehow or other, opportunities must be given for folk in or just outside the churches to examine the Christian essentials, because there are so many for whom this is a prime need.¹⁸

Instead we are filled with market-driven, fragmented small-group studies lead by facilitators rather than serious, ordered learning resources which are well integrated and span a length of time necessary to lay lifelong foundations in the Scriptures. The process of faith development encouraged in this paradigm is one which unfolds throughout our lifetimes. The process includes the following goals:

- early adulthood—major on the core principles of the faith
- middle adulthood—major on mastering the Scriptures
- later adulthood—major on mastering life

Let’s walk through this framework quickly.¹⁹ In early adulthood, the emphasis ought to be on the “first principles” of the faith (Colossionas 2:6-8). In the early church these were called the kerygma, Greek for proclamation (the essentials of the gospel) and the didache, Greek for teaching (the essentials of the apostles’ teaching). These truths taught by the apostles to the churches in the New Testament should provide us with a framework for setting the course of our lives. The framework involves these elements:

- individual identity in Christ
- family
- local church
- mission in the world

¹⁷ The *4th Generation Life Development Portfolio* is another LearnCorp life development resource. It is integrated with the *7th Priority Life Development Portfolio*. For a brochure on the system and accompanying seminar call LearnCorp at 515-292-6810.

¹⁸ *Growing in Christ*, by J.I. Packer (Crossway Books, 1994), pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁹ For a thorough treatment of this process, see my paper *Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm*.

This core teaching needs to be mastered by every Christian. We have developed two resources to help accomplish the mastery of these first principles. The first is a four volume series, produced for BILD-International, entitled *The Establishing Series*, designed to establish each believer in his or her faith. The second resource is BILD's *Leadership I* series—15 courses all built upon establishing churches at every level, consistent with the first principles. A combination of these courses can easily span across early adulthood, and is an integrative framework for all other training which may be implemented for believers in this stage of life.

When we move into middle adulthood the emphasis is on mastering the Scripture. Here the Old and New Testament both come into view. Few people set out to master the Scriptures, yet it ought to be the goal of every believer. We are not just talking about learning information. The idea is to do biblical theology—which in essence means to let Scripture unfold by itself, by book and author, allowing it to surface and reveal its own themes and issues. Only after going through this process can we confidently address all the issues of our lives and the culture in which we live from a biblical point of view. Any adult training program should have an ordered plan for each believer to master the Scriptures themselves over an extended period of time. BILD's *Leadership Series II* (4 Old Testament and 4 New Testament courses) is designed to provide the infrastructure for such an integrated program.

The later adulthood stage focuses on mastering life, which involves taking all of life's challenges, presenting issues, and problems and fully integrating them with our faith. If properly prepared by mastering the Scriptures over an extended period of life, we will have opportunities (not previously recognized) to make a very significant contribution to the church, both local and at large, even though we're not "theologically trained." In addition, this base of understanding of our faith will aid us in training our children, and in mastering the lifework that God has given us to do. Any adult Christian education program ought to provide opportunity for those in the later adulthood stage to engage in the serious process of doing theology in culture. This leads us to the final element of our curriculum framework.

Education and Lifework Development: In this section the issue is not fragmentation as much as a complete separation. The church offers very little training and assistance in helping people identify, develop, and excel in their own lifework. Christian work is understood to be work in the church, not our own lifework as it unfolds in the workplace and community life. This must change. We must develop Christian education programs in our churches that are integrated with our general education and lifework. Throughout this paper we have referred to *lifework*. What exactly do we mean by this? It is a concept larger than our career, though it includes our paid work. In Ephesians 2:10, it is stated that as believers we were all created for good works. We are each given natural abilities and spiritual gifts. And we are all to engage in good occupations—Titus 3:14. In other

words, each of us ought to have a growing sense throughout our lives of our calling—a growing sense of the work, the total work, for which God has created us. No part of our lives should be fragmented from our faith. The church must fully address and assist every believer in his or her lifework. The final section of our Christian education wisdom-based life development curriculum is our education and lifework development. How should we equip Christians to think about their education and lifework? How should we assist them in their overall development? Again, we build off the wisdom framework, and use it to help us think clearly about our education and lifework development at each stage of life:

Early adulthood—focus on core knowledge and our lifework

Middle adulthood—focus on mastering knowledge and our lifework

Later adulthood—focus on mastering wisdom and our lifework

Early in our adult lives, by necessity, our lifework and its accompanying education has to be somewhat general. We have had very little experience. Though our work may be on a very specific course, the education must be somewhat general because every area in life has first principles to be learned before we can become skilled masters. As we enter middle adulthood and gain more experience, we can go on to master specific areas of specialty in our lifework. Yet, we must all progress beyond becoming skillful masters to a wisdom stage in life. We need to develop an ability to think principled and creatively in the specialty areas of our lifework, and become wise in the general work of our lives which we share in common with others in later adulthood—especially in mentoring and heritage matters. The wisdom literature also provides a general framework for thinking about work as well:

Early adulthood—working hard, gaining experience

Middle adulthood—convergence, working skillfully

Later adulthood—mentoring others, enabling others, our crowning lifework, possible a second body of lifework

A comprehensive Christian education training program must include appropriate training in how to think about and develop lifework in all of its stages. For example, in early adulthood, we ought to provide training in a work ethic; in middle adulthood in mastering work yet keeping life in balance; and in the later adulthood stage, we ought to be providing training on such issues as heritage matters, mentoring skills and developing a personal life message. Moreover, it should all be integrated. Finally, we need to address the great questions of life as they surface in the world in which we live, in order to provide substantive answers to those amongst whom we work and live. The Great Books of the Western World (Britannica) is an excellent tool to aid us as we move through the journey of life—both as a general education supplement, and as an apologetic aid. See my Christian education paper on childhood and adolescence for a complete explanation of this resource.

To set this framework in motion, we have created a simple two-year program which we call *Leadership 2005*.²⁰ This program brings all three elements together.

Leadership 2005

- character development—*4th Generation Life Cycle System*
- faith development—*The Establishing Series*
- education and lifework development—*7th Priority Life Development Portfolio*

3. *The Life Development Resource Center*

The final core element of this paradigm is what I am calling a life development resource center. In light of the paradigmatic times in which we live, churches need to have a plan for responding to the equipping needs of believers.

What sorts of things should make up this life development resource center approach? No one knows for sure; we will have to create them as we go, as we move up the paradigm curve. However, from our study thus far of both the culture and Scripture, several elements seem to be key for such a church-based center.

Elements of a church-based Christian education resource center:

- a portfolio system of some type
- integrated courses and seminars
- apprenticeships, mentoring system, learning networks
- integrated curricula
- a computerized learning system and electronic library

The detailed vision for such a center must be saved for another paper or two. However, it does not take much imagination to envision how the church could develop a cutting edge ministry to its own people, as well as a natural bridge out into the non-believing community at its very point of need. Is job placement, welfare recovery, and prison and parole portfolio assistance likely to be a large need in the future?

Where does this all lead us? What are the challenges with which we are left after such an exhausting study?

²⁰ A brochure explaining this program and seminar is available from the LearnCorp Leadership Center.

**BUILDING A NEW VISION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:
PREPARING CHRISTIANS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE AND
COMMUNITY LIFE**

Several insights must converge at one time amongst leaders in a church and amongst partnering churches in order to begin the long-term initiatives needed to build this new vision. The insights and vision can be summarized as follows.

THE CORE OF THE VISION:

1. These are exciting times for educators of every type and they provide a special opportunity for Christian educators. To be effective in the new world which we are entering, we must be willing to build new paradigms from the ground up.
2. In the immediate future, pioneering churches need to take the lead in prototyping new, truly church-based, Christian education learning/resource centers. They should begin to build alliances with key Christian businessmen and women, and with innovative schools. (Kotkin's global tribes concept)
3. A bold and innovative, long-term strategy needs to be developed which draws on the emerging models, a strategy which even affects how we plan our church buildings of the future.
4. Finally, churches need to take very seriously what Marvin Olasky, in his paradigmatic book *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, calls the church to do. We must be ready to respond to the tremendous need of people left in the dust as the society shifts: mothers on welfare, the homeless, parolees and the millions who are displaced and confused in the wake of the great upheaval as we shift to a global economy.

These are exciting times. They are challenging times. If properly understood, they are times of unparalleled opportunity. Let's ask God to raise up a generation of visionary church leaders to lead us in pioneering our way into the 21st century—leaders with the clarity of vision, the soundness of doctrine, and the fearless resolve of our first century mentors.