

Christian Worldview of Classroom Management

For the Christian educator, classroom management is about more than behavior management or compliance. It is an opportunity for virtue formation. Ultimately, our approach to classroom management should be a reflection of our classroom culture, which is based on what we state, what we tolerate, and what we celebrate.

We want our classroom culture to reflect a Christian understanding of Hope, Truth, Identity, and Calling. Our goal is to aim for students' hearts and cultivate in them a love for God and what He calls good, true, and beautiful. Ultimately, this leads to true flourishing.

Let's look at how Hope, Truth, Identity, and Calling can shape your classroom culture and, as a result, your classroom management.

HOPE

- Christ's resurrection means there is hope for my students when they fail.
- Mistakes and failures are an opportunity to demonstrate grace.
- Because Christ is making all things new, I can be hopeful that my students can grow. I can reflect this hope through my attitude, actions, and words.
- Because God has placed my students in this class, they can be encouraged that their presence and effort here have purpose.

TRUTH

- Classroom expectations should not be arbitrary, or ultimately based on what's convenient, but on the Truth that God created the world and people to work a certain way.
- Classroom rules and consequences should point toward God, not me, as the ultimate authority and source of Truth.
- Students, like everyone, are affected by the Fall. I shouldn't be surprised by misbehavior but should treat my students with compassion even as I give appropriate consequences.
- When disciplining, I can remind students of the redemption Christ offers to all who turn to Him.
- I can encourage my students to participate in Christ's work of restoration by pursuing good, not just avoiding evil.

IDENTITY

- Student expectations are rooted in the truth of who humans are as relational beings.
- Insofar as it's possible, discipline should be aimed toward the restoration of relationships that students are made for—with God, Self, Others, and Creation.
- I can remind students that their choices—both wise and unwise—don't just affect them, but all their relationships.
- Behavior flows from identity, and behavioral expectations flow from my understanding of identity. Do I see my students as image bearers? Do I remind them that they are made and loved by God?
- Because students are image bearers, I am commanded to love them regardless of their behavior or academic performance.

CALLING

- Because students are called to this classroom, they have a responsibility to contribute to it, not just receive from it.
- Students have a responsibility to promote good and resist evil by pursuing integrity and refusing to cut corners.
- Students can repair what's broken by taking initiative to resolve conflicts when they hurt (or are hurt by) another student.
- Students can have a real impact in the classroom as they observe what's missing and work to generate it.



Practical Application

So, what does this actually look like in the classroom?

HOPE

- Pray for your students each morning by name. Good classroom management begins with prayer. Each of our students is made in the imago Dei, and it can be hard to imagine all the negative forces targeting them every day, even if they go to a Christian school. Prayer truly does protect them from attacks from the enemy, something they saw on TV the night before, or bullying they're experiencing from someone at school or at home.

TRUTH

- Place your classroom values where they are clearly visible and review them together daily or weekly. It's surprisingly easy to lose sight of the purpose behind what you're doing and why, so regular repetition is helpful. Explain to your students what your values mean and why they are important to understand and abide by (i.e. why they are not arbitrary).
- Consistency is key. Whether students are in kindergarten or 12th grade, they crave consistency in the way your classroom operates. It could be consistency in how you start the day with them, how you grade assignments and give feedback, or how you deal with behavioral issues.
- Proactively create clear guidelines and punishments for common behavioral problems. Outlining consequences ahead of time protects you from having to make that decision in the chaos of the moment. When behavioral issues arise, be fair and avoid reacting out of anger. This pairs with consistency. If a student feels their punishment is more severe than a peer that did the same thing, they will feel mistreated. The reality is, you might forget the consequences you gave for the same offense a week ago, but your students will remember.

IDENTITY

- Create a space where students feel comfortable and safe. From furniture to lighting to the posters on the wall, everything should have the purpose of creating a welcoming environment and increasing the possibility of learning. Being safe does not mean letting students walk all over you or get whatever they want; it means letting them be vulnerable with their struggles and the questions they have about school, their family, their future, and more.
- Make it clear from the beginning of the school year that you care about each student. Students today crave authenticity from their teachers, and if they feel that you don't like them or think they're annoying, they will have a difficult time in your class.
- Master your 'teacher stare.' Sometimes problems can be solved with just a look. The power of the stare is:
 - It's enough to get the student's attention.
 - It tells them that what they're doing is not acceptable (without being mean).
 - It communicates that you're in charge.
 - You don't have to expend extra energy or disrupt the flow of class by using words to explain why their behavior is wrong.
 - The stare is not angry. It is direct, but neutral.

CALLING

- Be open to change if something isn't working. As teachers, we have a lot of ideas about how things are going to go. We often expect our ideas to be executed just right and make everyone happy ... until the bell rings. If a class rule or procedure isn't going according to plan, change it. That doesn't mean you're a failure, or even that your idea was bad. It just didn't work the way you thought it would, and that is okay. Don't be afraid to change if there's a good reason for it.
- Don't be embarrassed to ask for help. Ask a co-teacher at your school or post in our [Colson Educators Community](#) about the problems you're facing and what you need help with.

