

**HOW TO  
START A NEW  
INDEPENDENT  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL**

Christian  
Concern



# INTRODUCTION

*“Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”*

MATTHEW 19:26

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.”*

PSALM 127:1

*The great salvation purposes of God, as Jesus explains to his disciples, are impossible for man. But with God “all things are possible.”*

*Many Christians can see the value of an education that is Christian from top to bottom. They can see how a wholeheartedly Christian school could support the discipleship of Christian families and even provide opportunities for outreach.*

*But actually starting a school – that’s daunting.*

*If you read the stories of recent school pioneers, you will be amazed as to how God miraculously stirred the vision, drew people together, provided the buildings and the finances and led the school to open.*

*Such impossible projects are indeed possible with God, and indeed are*

*possible for you, as you join him in building such a ‘house’.*

*Few feel qualified to undertake such a project. Nevertheless, time after time, we see God equipping ordinary people to turn the idea of a Christian school into reality.*

*This resource explores the key steps which lead to the opening of a new independent Christian school. The accompanying materials give you more detail on some of the specifics.*

*At Christian Concern, we’re very excited to see new Christian schools opening and we’re keen to help, even if you’re just thinking about the possibility. If you would like to discuss things further, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with our education team.*

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# THE FIVE STAGES OF STARTING A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## VISION

A Christian school does not start without a clear vision. It's important to understand that God initiates this vision. He speaks to someone - perhaps you - about being a leading figure in pioneering a new school.

This often comes through hearing the testimony of other Christian schools or seeing them in action. It can also begin from a realisation of the issues in society which affect children, which shocks or alerts the pioneers.

Quickly though, this general vision needs to be shaped. The sense of "You want a school here, don't you Lord!?" must lead to "What kind of school do you want?". Seeing other models of Christian schools can provide great inspiration and clarify the vision. The vision, guided through prayer, will grow and start to become clearer.

The vision must also be guided through relationships. The leading figures who sense this calling must start to speak about the vision to fellow Christians, church leaders and those who can support. By speaking out the vision in suitable contexts, such as church meetings, or parents' groups, a gathering of people can coalesce from those interested, and those who need to be part of the pioneering team. This is often where a shaping of the vision occurs, as

a well-led group finds the mind of Christ together about what kind of school will best serve the purposes of God.

Writing down the vision, perhaps on a webpage or in a document, helps bring clarity to the vision and helps to share it with others. Remember though, that you are seeking always to follow what God is saying, and what he is doing. Put this at the heart of your vision statements and at the centre of your meetings.

A wise man once said, "if you don't see the value, you won't pay the cost." As you speak of God's vision, speak of the value of our precious children, and his command to us to train them.

Some questions to consider:

- *What are your motivations for starting a Christian school?*
- *Have you sought God's leading and direction through prayer?*
- *What model for Christian education might you want to follow and why? (See Appendix 1)*
- *Have you written down your vision?*
- *What are your priorities for the school and what might be negotiable?*





## GATHERING

Two groups of people need to be gathered to turn a vision in to reality.

First, a team of key people with a variety of skills and potential influence. Second, a wider group of parents and supporters who will pray, serve and eventually populate the community of the school. It is important to be clear where early adopters of your vision will be best placed.

Gathering people so you can explain the vision, especially to leading figures and potential pioneering team members, is essential. Focusing such a meeting with prayer and worship helps everyone to see that it is the Lord's will being sought, and it is all in submission to him. Worshipful, prayerful people are essential to have in the mix, not just those who have practical wisdom or experience. Christian Concern would be delighted to join you at any such gathering event to provide a wider context to your vision, and support to your venture.

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Beyond these times (you may need more than one in more than one

venue), you can invite people to become part of the pioneering team. A balance of visionary leadership and accountable teamworking, built on strong, trusting relationships is very important. The enemy will often seek to thwart God's plans through relational disharmony, and so a commitment to love each other through these processes is essential for the pioneering team. Wise support from church leaders in this can make all the difference. You will come to a point where you know you have a committed team, and you must now strategise together.

Some questions to consider:

- *Who are the key people God has gathered to you so far?*
- *What is still lacking in your team that you can seek God for?*
- *How are you seeking to engage with potential team members from local churches?*
- *How will you keep good communication and strong relationship with key people?*

## STRATEGY

The most vital strategy to see a new Christian school come to fruition is faith and prayer and faith.

You need people to be praying for you, perhaps on a WhatsApp group of interested parties or as part of regular church small group. They need to be praying, along with you, and sometimes fasting, for the vision to be accomplished successfully.

Using the skills and giftings of the team (as it is not necessarily the gift of the inspiring pioneer) you should construct a plan which works back from the more detailed vision of an open school, to where you are now. This detailed vision includes the kind of Christian Education and the character discipleship, explained in clear key statements of vision, mission and values or virtues.

The strategic plan for the next year, if not three years, should include clear timescales, costs, and who is the key person driving forward the objectives. When a tall, secure skyscraper goes up, they can spend three years putting in the foundations before they ever build above the surface.

You need to clarify the proprietorial and charity structure you are aiming towards as part of your strategy, making sure to require Christian leadership. Planning in future vision casting occasions, and further gathering meetings in the early

months is also important to continue to build momentum and update people. You should note where the Christian parents who may be interested reside, both in terms of location and church affiliation. Christian home educators in a region are often interested. Your plan should include sections on staffing, premises, regulations and promoting the vision. You should be looking out for who the future Headteacher might be, and they may have come to light through the Gathering phase.

Reviewing the strategic plan every three months with the team will help you stay on track, and to adapt the plan. At a point where you have identified the leadership structure and buildings, you should begin to draft the registration documents indicated in Appendix 3. A column in your plan where you can record progress will hopefully provide encouragement and prayer points. Inevitably issues arise and some things happen more quickly and some much more slowly than expected.

You may find it necessary to redraft the vision, as you start to discover who God is sending and what opportunities he is opening up. You may need a flexibility to the Lord's steadily revealed purposes, and yet a clarity to the what the vision is, and also a clarity on which details are negotiable. For example, Christian



staff is not negotiable, but the kind of curriculum or premises may be.

Many, but not all, schools have found that starting with a group of around twelve younger children, and then building up the school as they age is the best way to set the school culture and grow in a manageable way. There are many ways the Lord may open doors however, and you may be provided with a large building with much capacity or a particular group of children or parents who the Lord is leading you to serve.

Some questions to consider:

- *Who is responsible for the strategic development plan?*
- *How much can be delegated to members of the team?*
- *How often is regular prayer planned regarding development priorities?*
- *Do you need to hone the vision statements in the light of how God is leading you?*
- *What advice might you need to receive on specific areas?*



## BATTLE

There is much challenge and sacrifice in starting a new Christian school. The strength of relationships, forged through regular times of prayer and worship, will be essential for when you hit these times. They will come. The Lord will demonstrate his power through these times. He will prove that he is building the house.

Your godly faith, dependence and resolve to give him the praise and glory, and making time to do this, is essential. Pray. Pray together for his school that he is building. Often the battle surrounds finding the building, the key staff, enough committed families, relational challenges, or government regulations and the registration process (see Appendix 3).

Professional advice from others who have walked this path may also be necessary to stand with you to handle the battle with wisdom. Pioneers often do not like to rely on others, especially at times of battle. But God's glory is often revealed through the team he brings together so that no-one can boast in their own achievements. His wider body, from different church backgrounds may be crucial to his plan coming about. Ask for help, and trust that the Lord will guide others to help you to see the victory. Such battles will prepare you for the ongoing challenging of being faithful to the long-term vision, for the seasons of battle and victory

that God has prepared for you as the school develops.

Some questions to consider:

- *What is the spiritual battle and where is the spiritual breakthrough needed?*
- *What sacrifices are needing to be made?*
- *How are you involving others to stand with you?*

## CELEBRATION

At various points, you should be giving glory to God. For providing the vision, the team, the building, the finances, the support and the children.

Once you come to opening the school, make a clear, Ebenezer-like statement of your celebration of all that God has done to accomplish the vision. Take photos, send a press release, plant a tree – do whatever you can to celebrate and mark God's goodness. It may have taken several years to get to this point, and although a new level of work now begins, you should set a tone of celebration which will encourage joy to be part of your ongoing life together as a school community.

- *What kind of markers will you put down as your 'Ebenezer'?*
- *At which points would you like to celebrate and give praise to God with others?*

## **PRACTICAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE**

Christian Concern's education team is keen to provide support and encouragement to those interested in starting a new independent Christian school.

At the time of writing, we are working with around twenty groups which are at different stages of this journey of starting a school. We gather groups of people who are starting schools or developing plans, to update, encourage and equip one another, as iron sharpens iron. We also host events to help those pioneering schools and are creating more resources like this one.

We have relationships with leaders of other organisations, and professionals who can provide advice and assistance. We can provide you with contacts to schools which are already operating so that you can see them in action and learn from the. All sorts of sharing of policies and expertise is already happening across the country.

Why not join this exciting movement?

To find out more about how we can help, please get in touch:

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# Christian Concern

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