**Reformation Day Chapel—
Spheres of Influence and Christian Education**

Tomorrow is Reformation Day, a day on which all Christians of all times, places and traditions are called to remember the constant work of God’s Spirit as He calls us, his people, out of unbelief and rebellion, into the goodness of the gospel. Today isn’t about Protestant versus Catholic. It’s about the people of God remembering who we are and recognizing God’s working among us.

Almost 500 years ago, Martin Luther lit a match that ignited the world. In nailing his 95 theses to the church door, he gave voice to the work of the Holy Spirit in his day. It changed everything about the way people lived—not just the way they did church. The Reformation changed politics, law, economics, art, music, language, education, even the way we view the individual in contrast to the larger community. God moved powerfully through Martin Luther and John Calvin to change the world for the better. That doesn’t mean everything they did was great—it means they left the world looking more like heaven than when they came.

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Today, the call for reformation and renewal is still just as fresh and relevant as it was in 1517. God continues to call the church further up and further in (to use the words of C.S. Lewis). This calling relates to you and why you’re here at NMCS but we’ll have to get there in a roundabout way.

The reason the Reformation touched so many aspects of life was the deeply held belief that Jesus is Lord of all. He’s not just in charge of your spiritual life—he’s in charge of every part of your life: from the way you worship to the way you eat. When you say Jesus is Lord, it affects the way you live not just what you believe. Martin Luther believed it. John Calvin believed it. Ulrich Zwingli believed it. They said, if you are a business person and you come to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, the proper response is not to leave your business and become a monk, priest, or pastor but rather to glorify God through your work. Deal honestly with your clients. Treat your workers justly. Be a tangible blessing to the community in which you reside. God gives to you so that you can give to others. You are blessed to be a blessing.

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Back in 2006, I was thinking about moving to California in order to be a part of a church because of the miracles they were seeing. My wife suggested we visit before we sell all of our things and go. That sounded like wisdom, so during spring break, we went to have a look around. Since we were already going to be there for the week, we decided to go to the conference they were hosting. During this conference, several speakers mentioned the 7 Mountains strategy--terminology we had never heard before.

The story is that sometime in the mid to late 1970s, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With a Mission (YWAM), had lunch together in Colorado. The night before, each of them had a dream they felt was a message for the other person. They both wrote the dream down. The next day, when the met for lunch, they traded papers and it was the exact same dream—same drawings and everything. That message was that if we are to impact any nation for Jesus Christ, then we would have to affect the seven mountains (or spheres) of society that are the pillars of any society--business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family and religion.

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The people at the conference were astounded. This was deep stuff for them. You mean I can serve God through my job? They were rediscovering the Reformation. My wife and I looked at each other and just grinned. Our community has been talking about this for over 100 years (though we’re just now learning about the gifts of the Holy Spirit). In the mid 1800s, a Dutch theologian named Abraham Kuyper explained the same idea using the phrase: ‘spheres of influence’.

The point is that the redemption story is bigger than just us; it even includes culture. Christ’s life, death and resurrection is about more than just saving you and me. The scope of God’s redemption purposes includes all things. All of creation is being transformed and will be remade under the kingship of Christ.

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“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:19,20).

That’s why Christians should be leading the charge in all sorts of areas: abortion and environmentalism, acts of justice and taking care of the poor.

That brings me full circle to why I believe you are here at NMCS. Some people may disagree with me but I’m convinced of this: if the purpose of this place (and Christian schools in general) is simply for you to grow up, live moral lives and love Jesus then I’m not interested. If that is our primary goal, then I think this is a tremendous waste of resources and effort. Generations of believers sacrificed time, treasure and tears not just to instill a certain type of worldview, or character, or set of religious practices, or even the passing down of our Story, as important as those things are (Wolterstorff 66)—they saw this place as a way of discipling the next generation to become agents of justice and mercy; bringing God’s Kingdom into whatever occupation or situation they found themselves. That next generation is you.

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We are called to be agents of restoration and reconciliation in every aspect of our lives (CRC 7). When Jesus taught us how to pray, he told us to pray ‘your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ We represent Jesus and enforce his victory on the cross over darkness in every circumstance. We bring Christ’s reign into every relationship, financial transaction, business, and governmental system in which we find ourselves. Christ did not die just to be your personal savior. He died to redeem a people and all of creation (Rom 8:22). Our job as Christians is to bring Heaven to Earth. Christian education is not exempt. NMCS exists to equip you to become co-laborers with God in “restoring creation and extending the kingdom” (CRC 7). “Kingdom is the content of the education” (CRC 6).

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Why are you here? It is nothing less than a revolutionary transformation of the world around us. The Lord calls you as missionaries, not just to individuals in far off countries but to entire spheres of influence in our society: education, entertainment, the arts, business, government, and media. I eagerly wait for the day when I can buy your album off iTunes, or buy tools from your business, or vote for you in an election.

But this can’t happen if we pretend like everything is okay. We must call out the lie that somehow you can divorce truth from the one who is Truth; that somehow you can separate public life from religious belief. We cannot hope to change a culture that we already agree with and want to fit into. In this sense, the Christian school becomes a greenhouse in which we nurture a different atmosphere from the larger community—a place where we can rest from eating and breathing the secular culture around us. It becomes a place where we nurture a Kingdom counterculture—a community opposed to the broader consumer self-centered culture of our nation (Wolterstorff 134).

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Here, our goal is to nurture you as an invasive species. This world is not your home; you are aliens whose citizenship is in heaven. Planting a seedling in a non-native environment can damage or even kill it. We want you to grow strong in the Lord; people who will not just hang-on to their faith but instead thrive when planted in the world. We do this not just through Bible classes, but through acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus in every subject area—saturating, to the best of our ability, every subject in the gospel. We want the kingdom culture to spread throughout our society like dandelions in a field: justice, grace, mercy, love and self-sacrifice seeding the soil of our nation. We’re here to become a people of dissent: a prophetic voice calling out in the wilderness “prepare the way of the Lord” (Matt 3:3).

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Why are you here? To train you head and your heart to infiltrate society on every level: to be ambassadors of a kingdom and the one true God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, Jesus of Nazareth.

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Welcome to the Reformation.

Works Cited.

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