

Christian Communicators of Ohio MISSION AND VISION

Christian Communicators of Ohio (CCO) has established a mission statement with two primary purposes in mind: first, to explain to those outside the organization the purpose of CCO; and secondly, to continually remind everyone within the organization of that purpose. The second purpose is the more important of the two: historically, all kinds of organizations have strayed from the intended purpose envisioned by their founders. Additionally, the mission statement of CCO guides the current leadership team, and is expected to do so for leaders of this organization in the future. It also establishes mutual expectations between the organization and the constituents that interact with CCO.

To understand CCO and its role, the mission statement must be understood. It is as follows:

“The mission of Christian Communicators of Ohio (CCO) is to assist parents who are home educating their children in Ohio and surrounding states with the development of communication and critical thinking skills, equipping these children to be faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ by preparing them to give a defense of their faith to everyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is within them, and to do so with grace, seasoned with salt.”

The following concepts are incorporated into this mission statement:

Parents: While CCO provides a forum for the development of students, the primary constituents that CCO seeks to serve are the parents. CCO believes that it is the parents’ responsibility to educate and to develop character in their children. CCO does not usurp or assume this parental responsibility. CCO exists to help in this regard, and expects parental involvement in all CCO events.

Home Education: CCO serves the home education community. While the skills acquired through participation in CCO events are no doubt desirable to students being educated in other learning environments, CCO activities are for home educated students.

Communication Skills: Competitive speech and debate events can enhance communication skills. Such skills are critical in today’s world, especially in business and civic affairs. More importantly, the Bible clearly teaches that the sovereign God of this universe has in His wisdom chosen people to communicate His message to the world. While CCO expects that many of the competitors in the program will use these skills to excel in a wide array of endeavors, the chief purpose behind this training is to use these skills to advance the Kingdom of God.

Critical Thinking Skills: It is not enough to simply be an eloquent and effective speaker: the message delivered by the skilled orator is more important than the method and style of delivery. History is replete with examples of individuals with outstanding oratory skills, but who had misguided and incorrect messages. Through speech and

debate competition, critical thinking skills can be taught, developed, practiced and refined.

Faithful Servants: A skilled, but unfaithful individual adds little value to any endeavor. A skilled, faithful, but arrogant and boastful individual likewise adds little value. Proverbs warns repeatedly about God's displeasure with the proud. Acquiring and perfecting skills can, in some, lead to a lack of humility and the loss of a servant-like attitude. While core technical skills are developed, CCO will simultaneously seek to instill in the students a desire for the attitude of a faithful servant.

Lord Jesus Christ: CCO is a distinctively Christian organization, adhering to the Biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, the God-man who lived, died, and rose again, and who lives today. "At the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:10-11).

Defense of Their Faith: Believers, in I Peter 3:15, are admonished to "...always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you..." The Christian should always be prepared to provide such an answer, and yet, do so "...with gentleness and respect." Competitive events and a desire to win may conflict with the goals of gentleness and respectfulness. CCO will encourage students to develop these attitudes along with their oratory skills.

Grace and Salt: Paul issues a similar challenge in Colossians 4:5-6. Believers are to "...make the most of every opportunity." Their conversation is to always be "full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." CCO will strive to prepare students to make the most of every opportunity and to do so in a gracious manner in order to bring glory to God.

In addition to its mission statement, CCO has established the following vision statement:

"To accomplish this mission CCO will provide opportunities for the above stated home educated children to participate in competitive speech and debate tournaments where an emphasis will be placed on excellence in speech, critical thinking from a Biblical worldview, and Christ-like character development. Students will be encouraged to recognize and develop their God-given gifts, to work as unto the Lord, to acknowledge God's sovereignty in all events, and to give God the glory in all that is done."

Several aspects of the vision statement are common with the mission statement and require no further amplification. Below, phrases unique to the vision statement are explained:

Excellence in Speech: Colossians 3:23 challenges the Christian as follows: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart..." Aside from the competitive aspects which

encourage excellence for those motivated by such, CCO will seek to instill in the students a desire to obtain excellence in all that is done.

Critical Thinking from a Biblical Worldview: It is not enough to be a good communicator—the message itself is critical. A Christian’s message and life must be consistent with Biblical thought. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses reminded his people that God had sought to teach them that man is to live “...on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Integrating the principles of Scripture into everyday thinking in the 21st century is not an easy task. While CCO expects that Bible training will be conducted primarily by the family and local church, in tournaments, students will have the opportunity to exercise and refine these critical thinking skills.

Christ-like Character Development: At CCO tournaments, Christ-like character is emphasized. This may take many forms, including: 1) showing respect toward other competitors, parents, judges, and siblings; 2) dealing honestly and forthrightly with evidence; 3) showing humility; and 4) being thankful, regardless of the outcome of the round, that is, to “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (I Thessalonians 5:7). Christ-like character development is held by CCO as a higher goal than the development of speech and debate skills. In I Samuel 16:7, God Himself reminded Samuel that He has different standards: “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” CCO is concerned with the student’s heart.

Recognition and Development of God-given Gifts: The competitors must first recognize that their gifts, whether great or small, are God-given. This recognition places them on a path of humility and service that God can use. The competitive environment can actually encourage the opposite effect: 1) those who win tournaments can easily become proud and boastful, arrogant and puffed up; and 2) those who do not win can become discouraged and disgruntled, complaining and bitter. CCO believes it is possible in tournaments to minister to both groups, and to encourage the students to recognize and develop their own unique God-given gifts. Further, CCO encourages older and more experienced competitors to help younger students in a servant-like manner, using their gifting to help others.

Work as Unto the Lord: Colossians 3:23, previously mentioned in the context of excellence, also instructs believers to do everything “...as working for the Lord, not for men.” When performing tasks as unto the Lord, God-given talents and abilities are used as intended by the Creator. While Scripture is filled with admonitions against prideful attitudes, perhaps none is more vivid than Proverbs 6:16 where one of the seven detestable items includes “haughty eyes”. At CCO tournaments, the competitors will always be encouraged to look upward.

Acknowledgement of God’s Sovereignty: Another life lesson that must be learned is that God’s omniscient sovereignty applies to all the events of man and nature. In winning and in losing, competitors at CCO tournaments are encouraged to recognize God’s sovereignty: in the record, in the comments of the judges, and in the feedback from coaches and parents. As recorded in Genesis 50:20, Joseph was able to look back at his

life, and even the actions of his brothers, and declare to them that "...God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Competitors are encouraged to see God's hand in the outcome of events as did Joseph.

Giving God the Glory: After the first two commandments, as recorded in Exodus 20:5, God declares "...for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." This is, of course, fully consistent with His displeasure with the proud and boastful: He will not be usurped. The arrogant directs praise to himself; the servant directs glory to God. Tournaments that distribute awards to the winners create a situation wherein God can be robbed of His glory. Scripture also teaches, however, that there is a season for everything: a time to laugh, and a time to mourn (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Winning a tournament is a joyous time, one for celebration. The goal is to exhibit the proper attitude, not to suppress either the joyful celebration or to ignore a disappointment. Students, particularly those talented individuals who find themselves frequently being recognized, must learn to live out James 4:20 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." At CCO tournaments, competitors and parents are all encouraged to proclaim "To God be the glory, great things He has done."

The principles incorporated in the Mission and Vision Statement guide CCO in deciding the nature of the competition to be offered, how tournaments are to be run, and how to interact with students, parents and judges. Parents who share these values and who are striving to develop them in their children are welcomed and encouraged to become a part of CCO and to participate in CCO events.