

# Why Christian Schools Should Adopt Restorative Justice?

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## *Abstract*

*Christian schools have the responsibility to teach students to view everything from God's perspective. Hence, all components of Christian education, including discipline practices, should be based on the Bible. Traditionally, the discipline approach in schools is mainly retributive justice that focuses on the rules that are broken, the offenders and the punishments. The offenders should get the deserved punishment for breaking the rules. A different approach, that is restorative justice, focuses on addressing the harm caused, the victims' feeling and restoring the broken relationship caused by the offense through reconciliation. To find the most biblical approach to be implemented in Christian schools, this paper first looks at the presupposition of both approaches through literature studies and then review it in the light of the Word of God. The result is apparent that restorative justice should be adopted by Christian schools in order to stay faithful to the mandate which is to bring students to God. Further arguments on the importance of adopting this approach are presented concisely. Nevertheless, more research is needed in this area to ensure successful implementation.*

**Keywords:** *Christian school, discipline, retributive justice, restorative justice*

## **Introduction**

School is not only a place for children to learn academic subjects but also a place to build their characters. However, a study in the USA<sup>1</sup> shows that school still has a lot of homework in instilling good characters to students. Poor characters produce bad behaviors that lead to discipline problems in schools, like disrespect, defiance, bullying, and aggression.<sup>2</sup> This is worrying since the problems create much harm to young people, take an example of bullying. An extensive study in 25 countries shows that bullying is a universal problem that affected the emotions of both the victims and the bullies.<sup>3</sup> Too many news telling stories about students, who are victims of bullying, claimed their own lives.

Schools respond differently to tackle soaring discipline problems. In the 1990s, American schools applied a zero-tolerance policy that easily suspends and expels students for

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<sup>1</sup> Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics, "2012 Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth - Honesty," 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon Linde, "Disciplinary Problems in the Classroom: Types & Causes," Study.com, accessed December 6, 2019, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/disciplinary-problems-in-the-classroom-types-causes.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Tonja R. Nansel and Wendy Craig, "Cross-National Consistency in the Relationship Between Bullying Behaviors and Psychosocial Adjustment," Archives of, accessed December 6, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2556236/>.

committing offenses. The policy authorizes the involvement of police officers to handle discipline problems at schools. Frequently, referral to the police may result in an arrest – hence the term “school-to-prison pipeline” – for even trivial offenses.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, with all these drawbacks, there is no evidence that zero-tolerance policy solves the discipline problems or even reducing it.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, in the mid-2000s, a contrasting approach, restorative justice, is slowly taking place in American schools replacing zero-tolerance policy.<sup>6</sup> It focuses on restoring damaged relationships done by the offense rather than focus on administering punishment to the offenders. Restorative justice, or also known as restorative practices, has started globally known<sup>7</sup> and implemented in different countries like the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Japan. Some of the countries adopted it earlier with different names but use the same principles.

Prominent theorists of restorative justice are Christians who use theology in building the concept of restorative justice. The pioneer, Howard Zehr - known as the grandfather of restorative justice, is a Mennonite Christian who developed the theory based on *shalom* theology—a sense of “all-rightness”.<sup>8</sup> Christopher D. Marshall further argued that restorative justice can be seen in God’s work through Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> Hence, restorative justice is developed according to the Bible, even Osakabe claimed that restorative justice can be understood wholly only through theology.<sup>10</sup>

This article tries to provide reasons for why Christian schools should adopt restorative justice instead of retributive justice in their discipline practices. Presupposition analysis and theological review will be deployed to examine both approaches. Presupposition analysis of retributive justice is done by dissecting three principles of retributive justice, as defined by The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,<sup>11</sup> to reveal the core belief underlying the approach. Followed by a theological review to compare the belief with biblical principles and values. The same methodology is done for restorative justice by dissecting three pillars of restorative justice as explained by Zehr.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to that, the role of Christian schools in educating the next generation thus influencing the society is presented. Hence, the purpose of this article is to show that the

<sup>4</sup> Katherine Evans and Dorothy Vaandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools* (New York, US: Good Books, 2016), 34.

<sup>5</sup> R. J. Skiba and K. Knesting, “Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice,” *New Directions for Youth Development* 92 (2001): 17–43

<sup>6</sup> Evans and Vaandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools*, 35.

<sup>7</sup> M. Armour, “Restorative Justice: Some Facts and History,” Tikun, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, Third Edit (Waterloo, Netherlands: Herald Press, 2005), 149–151.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher D. Marshall, *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible’s Teachings on Justice* (New York, US: Good Books, 2005), 67.

<sup>10</sup> Yutakabe Osaka, “Lost in Translation : An Analysis of Christian Restorative Justice Advocacy in Britain A Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Divinity at the University of Aberdeen By Yutaka Osakabe September 2018” (University of Aberdeen, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Alec Walen, “Retributive Justice,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016. Accessed 6 December, 2019. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3216-0\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3216-0_13).

<sup>12</sup> Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (New York, US: Good Books, 2014), 32–35.

implementation of restorative justice is imperative to assist Christian schools in fulfilling their mandates.

## Christian Education

Christian education is Christian because theological beliefs should inform and influence not only the content of education but also the overall approach to education including its practices.<sup>13</sup> Hence, all aspects of Christian education must be based on the Bible, as stressed by Kienel, that “there is no part of the Scripture which cannot contribute to our instruction and the forming of our life and manners... Let us, therefore, labor diligently to learn the contents of the Book of God, and never forget it is the only writing in which the Creator of heaven and earth condescends to converse with mankind.”<sup>14</sup>

Parallel to that, Estep writes, “Not only does it supply the content of Christian instruction, but it also provides direction, models of educations, methodology, and a rationale for Christian education.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, it is essential for Christian education to integrate Bible in its teaching and practice. As concluded by Manogu “Therefore, the approaching model that Christian can apply, which cohere to biblical truth, is reconstruction or paradigmatic”<sup>16</sup> that is biblical integration. Furthermore, MacCullough claimed that, “The key distinctive of a truly Christian education ... is the effective practice of worldview integration, that is, an approach to biblical integration that leads to a Christian worldview.”<sup>17</sup> In order to do this, different model of bible integration has been proposed by Christian educators, however, most of them focus on integrating the Bible to the teaching of academic subjects, and not other practices in school. Thus, integrating Bible principles to the practices of school discipline is, sadly, lacking yet important.

As an instrument to educate young people, Christian education has a mandate which is to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28). Stephen C. Perk as quoted by Douglas Wilson put is as “For the Christian the purpose of education is to facilitate maturation in the image of God and thus grow into true manhood and womanhood so that the child might be able to fulfill his creation mandate in obedience to God’s word.”<sup>18</sup> Hence “educational methods should follow out of theory based on the social sciences but ultimately grounded in our theology”<sup>19</sup> to completely fulfill its mandate. Christian school, then, will be impactful to the society by producing mature in Christ people, restoring the broken world.

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<sup>13</sup> James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Paul A. Kienel and Gibbs Ollie E., *Philosophy of Christian School Education*, ed. Berry Sharon E. (Colorado, US: ACSI Publisher, 1982), 315.

<sup>15</sup> Estep Jr., Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 57.

<sup>16</sup> Ridwanta Manogu, “A Theological Review of Approaching Models in the Dialog of Faith and Science,” *Diligentia*, no. 1988 (2019): 38–39.

<sup>17</sup> Martha E. MacCullough, *Undivided: Developing a Worldview Approach to Biblical Integration* (Colorado, US: Purposeful Design Publications, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Estep Jr., Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 31.

## School Discipline

Discipline is an important component in education, it manages students' behavior by setting rules and procedures, and strategies to enforce it. Without proper discipline, it is impossible for schools to be a safe and conducive environment to learn and interact. A lot of times, school discipline is seen as rigid, limiting and punitive, hence students tend to be resentful in a school that is considered "discipline". For Christian schools, discipline, may not be an interesting topic of discussion, since Jesus' teaching is more about loving and caring for one another. However, Christian schools, by avoiding the subject, maybe practicing a discipline approach that is not biblical out of their ignorance. Ashford reminded that every square inch of one's life should be governed by God,<sup>20</sup> and Christian schools, as a community of faith, is not an exception. Christian educators should give more importance and urgency to their search for discipline practice that is based on sound theology.

Discipline is such a large field in education, hence the discussion in this article is limited to the strategies utilized by the school authority to deal with an offense. The term discipline is almost exclusively used in the education context, a more general term that is used in other context is justice. In this article, the term justice and discipline are used interchangeably. There are two different approaches to justice: retributive justice and restorative justice.

### Retributive Justice

Retributive justice has been dominantly practiced in the past centuries. There are three principles governing this practice according to Walen, the principles are "1) that those who commit certain kinds of wrongful acts, paradigmatically serious crimes, morally deserve to suffer a proportionate punishment; 2) that it is intrinsically morally good—good without reference to any other goods that might arise—if some legitimate punisher gives them the punishment they deserve; and 3) that it is morally impermissible intentionally to punish the innocent or to inflict disproportionately large punishments on wrongdoers."<sup>21</sup>

For centuries, penal justice system has adopted retributive justice in its pursuit of delivering justice. It stressed the importance of carrying the right process to determine guilt and followed by weighing the proper punishment. The implication is, as stated by Zehr, "justice is defined by the process more than by the outcome. Procedure overshadows substance. Have the right rules and processes been followed? If so, justice was done."<sup>22</sup> The practices, most of the time, alienate the victim from the process of justice. They are treated as mere witnesses whose hurts are not properly acknowledged. The offenders, are not much different, may not comprehend the whole process as they are represented by their lawyers. Almost the entire process is done by professionals with little engagement to the very people who are involved in the offense; the victims and the offenders. The victims have no access to find the reasons of being the object of an offense, nor a proper closure. The wounds are left untreated. The offenders may never learn the weight of the harm caused by the offense, nor the chance to be accountable for their actions, other than being punished.

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce Riley Ashford, *Every Square Inch: An Introduction to Cultural Engagement for Christians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 29.

<sup>21</sup> Walen, "Retributive Justice."

<sup>22</sup> Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, 85.

The school practice of justice is not much different from penal justice. When an offense is committed, these 3 questions are asked, "1) What rules have been broken? 2) Who did it? 3) What do they deserve?"<sup>23</sup> In the process, the school authority may engage all parties involved in the offense to find out what happened. Once all the three questions are answered, the school administers punishment to the offenders. Unfortunately, a lot of times, the punished students, instead of taking the responsibility for their actions, feels injustice and blaming the school of unfairness. While the victims may feel unsafe that the offenders may repeat the offense because now, they have more reasons to do so. The offense causes harm, that is a broken relationship, unfortunately, the harm is left untreated, leaving both the victims and offenders anxious to one another. Ignorantly, school authority thinks that the problem is solved when punishment is delivered.

### *Presupposition Analysis and Theological Review*

The three principles of retributive discipline as suggested by Walen are examined to unearth the presupposition of the principles.

- (1) "that those who commit certain kinds of wrongful acts, paradigmatically serious crimes, morally deserve to suffer a proportionate punishment;"<sup>24</sup>

The statement implies that inflicting pain to the offenders is needed to get even and make them learn the lesson, hoping they will not repeat the offense in the future, preventing recidivism. This is the principle of behaviorism which is to give certain conditioning to produce certain behavior from the object, included in the conditioning is reward and punishment. To discourage an occurrence of a certain behavior, punishment is given.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the offenders are seen as intelligent animals whose behaviors are caused by stimuli, the environmental conditions. They are not able to internalize their experiences, hence they have no free will.<sup>26</sup>

The Bible clearly tells the story of creation, including the creation of human being that is different from other creations. God created human in His Image and Likeness from the dust of the ground breathed the breath of life. While other creations, including animals, are created ex nihilo, from nothingness. We were created to have dominion over the rest of visible creations on earth as opposed to being merely equal to animals. Our mind and spirit allow us to have free will, even the option to rebel against God. Just the reverse to the belief of behaviorism, our outward behavior is the expression of our internal-self. Prov 4:23 said "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

The Bible does say that environment can influence people, human being is responding to stimuli, as Paul said, "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor. 15:33). However, that does not define a person. On the contrary, a Christian should not be shaped by the environment but be restored from inside out by fixing our attention to God (Rom. 12:2).

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<sup>23</sup> Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, 31.

<sup>24</sup> Walen, "Retributive Justice."

<sup>25</sup> B. F. Skinner, *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis* (New York, US: Appleton-Century, 1938).

<sup>26</sup> Khoe Yao Tung, *Pembelajaran Dan Perkembangan Belajar* (Jakarta, Indonesia: Indeks, 2015), 151-159.

Manipulating the environment to generate certain behaviors may work to some degree but it does not change one's persona.

Another idea on the statement is that justice is served by act of revenge which is if you hurt me then you deserved to be hurt in return, it is retributive. This is in contrast to Jesus's teaching in Matt. 5: 38–39, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." Moreover, Jesus teaches His followers to love their enemies.

- (2) "that it is intrinsically morally good—good without reference to any other goods that might arise—if some legitimate punisher gives them the punishment they deserve;"<sup>27</sup>

The principle suggests that there is a lawful body to deliver punishment and the act of inflicting pain, as punishment, is morally good. This shows another evident principle of behaviorism in retributive justice which recognizes the role of "teacher" as an authority who gives conditioning and the role of "student" as an object to receive stimuli. This principle may soften the revenge taste of the first principle as the payback action is not done by the victim but carried by another party that is given right to do so, "the teacher". Hence, one may argue that the punishment is not an act of revenge but only a mere stimulus to discourage certain behavior.

Condemning others is prohibited, as Jesus said in Luk. 6:37, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned ...", even at times when we have the authority to do so. A famous example in the Bible about not condemning but forgiving others is a story of a prostitute who was condemned by the scribes and Pharisees. They asked Jesus to punish her according to Moses' Law. Instead of executing the punishment, Jesus showed them that all of them are sinful and do not deserve to condemn the woman. Only Jesus, who deserves to condemn but instead of punishing, He showed mercy to the woman (Joh. 8: 1-12).

Teacher-student relationship in the Bible is known as discipleship which is 1) intentional – Jesus appointed His disciples; 2) relational – Jesus be with His disciples; 3) deployment – Jesus sent out His disciples. Hence, it is not teacher as the subject and student as the object, that is a picture of behaviorism.

- (3) "that it is morally impermissible intentionally to punish the innocent or to inflict disproportionately large punishments on wrongdoers."<sup>28</sup>

In order to do this, there must be a party that will take the role of the judge to determine whether a person is innocent or guilty. It relies on human wisdom to discern the case and decide the outcome. Unfortunately, as a fallen image of God, a lot of time, our judgment is distorted by false beliefs, subjectivity, and lack of true knowledge. We are not reliable entities to make a judgment to others as Jesus said in Luk. 6:37, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned ..." We shall not judge other people because we are not perfect ourselves and our imperfections may bias our judgments. Even when we have the authority to judge others, we should do it cautiously, as God is the only true and just Judge.

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<sup>27</sup> Walen, "Retributive Justice."

<sup>28</sup> Walen, "Retributive Justice."

In conclusion, retributive justice is derived from behaviorism that regards everything as a material object, including humans, thus viewing humans as clever animals that have no free will. Retributive justice also relies on unreliable human judgment and wisdom.

## Restorative Justice

Howard Zehr defines restorative justice as “a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible.”<sup>29</sup> To understand better the difference between restorative justice with retribution justice, Zehr presented three different questions. Usually, the questions asked are 1) What laws have been broken? 2) Who did it? 3) What do they deserve? While in restorative justice, the parallel questions are 1) Who has been harmed? 2) What are their needs? 3) Whose obligations are these?<sup>30</sup>

Most of the time, the victims of an offense are neglected in the justice-seeking process. They are on the sideline; their feelings are not considered; harms are not addressed. All the questions are revolved around the offenders who may not fully understand the implications of their actions to the victims.<sup>31</sup> In restorative discipline, harm is the main subject because any offenses cause harm and the harm may not be limited to the victims but also to the community, in some cases the offenders are also harmed. The harms need to be addressed by attending their needs because harm results in obligations. Restorative justice holds the offenders accountable by doing their obligations needed to repair the damaged relationship. However, it is not only limited to the offenders, in most cases, the communities also have their own obligation to make the situation as it should be.

## *History of Restorative Justice*

The development of restorative justice is quite new in modern times and still not widely known. In the 1970s, restorative justice began as an effort to facilitate a mediation between victims and offenders in criminal justice setting. The practices continued to spread and evolve for the next decades under different names, taking different shapes and forms, nevertheless, the essence is still the same which is the spirit of reconciliation.

Zehr’s book, “Changing lenses: A new focus for crime and justice”, published in 1990, is considered as the first book that writes, then ill-defined, restorative discipline theory. It gives a clear framework for those who want to implement restorative justice in their judicial systems. Since then, the vision of Zehr was snow-balled at lightning speed beyond his expectation. More criminal systems adopted restorative justices and more works of literature were written on this subject, amplifying the idea.<sup>32</sup>

Soon, people started to adopt restorative justice in different settings and contexts like in education, counseling, social work, workplace, and religious community. And now, not only it spreads on different settings but also has reached every corner of this world.<sup>33</sup> The idea has become a social movement to institutionalize reconciliation in a way of acknowledging and

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<sup>29</sup> Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, 31–34.

<sup>32</sup> Evans and Vaandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools*, 29–30.

<sup>33</sup> Ted Wachtel, *Defining Restoration*, 2016, 3.

addressing harm as a process of restoring a relationship. One of the institutions that successfully adopt this is school.

The first recorded school adopting restorative justice is a school in Queensland, Australia, when they responded to an assault happened at school in 1994.<sup>34</sup> Other schools around the world started to implement restorative justice approaches, for example, mediation conferences and different circles to facilitate the meeting among the victims, offenders, and facilitators. Sometimes, the practices invite parents, teachers and the communities as well.<sup>35</sup> There is still no standard in the implementation of restorative justice in school hence creating many challenges and confusion at the early stage of the adaptations. Even now, still, more research and further studies are needed to strengthen the initiatives.<sup>36</sup>

American schools find restorative disciplines as a good alternative to retributive disciplines as the response to growing concerns on the zero-tolerance policy. The idea of doing the otherwise from the current approach draws attention from schools. More funding and research have supported more schools in adopting the approach.

### *Presupposition Analysis*

To do presupposition analysis for restorative justice, three pillars of restorative justice presented by Zehr are examined. 1) "Restorative justice focused on harm." Every offense causes harm, not only to the victims but also to the communities. Therefore, focusing on harm means to put great concern to the victims and affected communities. They are engaged in the process to ensure their needs are attended. It is a healing process for everyone. 2) "Wrongs or harms results in obligations." The offenders should be accountable for their actions, not merely by being punished, but, by "making things right as much as possible". 3) "Restorative justice promotes engagement or participation." Involving all stakeholders, including the victims, the offenders and communities, is the key to the healing process.<sup>37</sup> Without it, there is no healing. The pillars resemble the idea of sin that causes the world to become broken, distorted, fallen, and in need of healing.

### *Theological Review*

#### *Shalom*

Howard Zehr developed the theory of restorative justice based on the theology of *shalom*. Restorative does not mean that the process would like to re-create the situation to the before condition but to go beyond that which is to bring people to *shalom*, a condition of "where it should be". An ideal condition that God intended in the first place. Moreover, Zehr defines *shalom* as a condition of all-rightness, that is, the right relationship between God and humans; and among human beings. Hence, the concept of *shalom* is about relationship, where it should be, which is a perfect relationship seen in the Triune God. That is the ideal condition

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<sup>34</sup> Lisa Cameron and Margaret Thorsborne, "Restorative Justice and School Discipline: Mutually Exclusive?," *Reshaping Australian Institutions Conference "Restorative Justice and Civil Society"*, Australian National University, Canberra, February, 1999, 1999, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Nancy Hurley et al., "Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools: A Research Review," 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Nancy Hurley et al., "What Further Research Is Needed on Restorative Justice in Schools?," *WestEd*, 2015, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED559727>.

<sup>37</sup> Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, 32–35.



that human being should develop their relationship among themselves.<sup>38</sup> Zehr states it as “*Shalom* encapsulates God’s basic intention, God’s vision, for humankind. Consequently, we must understand salvation, atonement, forgiveness, and justice from their roots in *shalom* . . . God intends for people to live in right relationship with one another and with God. To live in *shalom* means that people live in peace, without enmity.”<sup>39</sup>

As an offense always brings harm and harm damages relationships, hence in restorative justice, we address harm to restore the relationship to where it should be. And it is the obligation of the offenders to make things right, as Zehr writes, “The primary obligation, of course, is on the part of the one who has caused the violation. When someone wrongs another, he or she has an obligation to make things right. This is what justice should be about. It means encouraging offenders to understand and acknowledge the harm they have done and then taking steps, even if incomplete or symbolic, to make that wrong right [...] Offenders often need strong encouragement or even coercion to accept their obligations.”<sup>40</sup> Restorative justice does not let the offenders be off the hook, contrary, it requires the offenders to be accountable for their actions. In the process, they will learn the implication of their offenses to the victims and how to make things right. Justice is not served by punishing the offenders but by restoring *shalom*. Injustice is the absence of *shalom*.<sup>41</sup>

#### *God’s Saving Justice*

Rehabilitation of justice is an important theme of the Bible. Justice that is loving, merciful and caring. The story of justice in the Bible is primarily a restorative activity that is evident in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The vision of restoring justice embodied in the teaching and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth coheres with the restoring justice enacted by his death and resurrection.<sup>42</sup>

Marshall states that justice does not demand punishment, instead “justice is satisfied by repentance, restoration and renewal.”<sup>43</sup> Hence, any punishment imposed by God or the community of faith is not retributive but redemptive in nature to restore *shalom*. Marshall concludes that “according to the witness of the New Testament, the basic principle of the moral order is not the perfect balance of deed and desert but redeeming, merciful love.”<sup>44</sup> All of these principles are embodied in restorative justice.

#### *Grand narrative*

Human, as the crown of the creation, wanted to become like God and rebelled against him. They failed to fulfill their mandates and disgraced by sin. Hence, the perfect image of God has been distorted and the harmonious relationship between human and God is broken. Man, who was destined to express His glory, is now hopeless, waiting for the judgment to receive the wage of sin, which is death, eternal separation with God. However, through Christ,

<sup>38</sup> Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, 148–150.

<sup>39</sup> Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, 148.

<sup>40</sup> Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, 224.

<sup>41</sup> Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, 228–230.

<sup>42</sup> Geoff Broughton, “Restorative Justice: Opportunities for Christian Engagement,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 3, no. 3 (2009): 299–318.

<sup>43</sup> Marshall, *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible’s Teachings on Justice*, 61.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 38.

God works the salvation for human, in order to put right what is wrong and restore the broken relationship.<sup>45</sup>

Looking from bird's-eye view, it is evident that reconciliation, which is the essence of restorative justice, is the pivotal theme of the grand narrative. Instead of giving punishment, Jesus died on the cross to reconcile human with the Creator, restoring their relationship. The ultimate restorative justice. Marshall sums it up, "the biblical metanarrative can be read as one large story of God's restorative justice at work."<sup>46</sup>

## Biblical Justice

The Bible contains both stories of retributive and restorative justice. Hence, careful attention to the background and context of each story should be carried out to discern the justice that is biblical, as Marshall said that "Biblical justice includes retributive components, but it cannot be adequately characterized principally as retributive justice. It is better described as a relational or restorative justice."<sup>47</sup>

Marshall elaborates four main levels of biblical material that supports the foundation of restorative justice. 1) At linguistic level, the Bible refers justice (*misphat*) and righteousness (*sedeqah*) in overlapping meaning, 2) at macro level, the grand narrative, 3) at the legislative level, numerous episode in the Bible showing restorative justice at work, 4) at ecclesial level, relationship within the community of faith.<sup>48</sup>

## Discipline for Christian Schools

Christian schools should:

invites young people to see and understand the world through the perspective of God's truth. The Bible becomes the lens in which students view what they are learning. The lens focusses their thinking on ultimate truth—a biblical vision for life where the world is created and sustained by God; where God has acted in history to deal with the distortions of creation caused by human rebellion; and where history is advancing towards a new creation in which all things are reconciled to God through Jesus.<sup>49</sup>

It is evident that the only compatible discipline to be practiced in a truly Christian school is restorative justice. This allows Christian school to integrate Bible, not only in terms of academic subjects, but also, in its practice of discipline. Hence, Bible integration has another area that can be claimed as "mine". Discipline is no longer a practice detached from biblical principles but a practice that is based on relationships with God and others to create *shalom*.

Frequently, discipline creates resentments towards school when students feel they have been treated unfairly or being punished wrongfully. Not only restorative justice minimizes the problems, but it becomes a model for students to resolve their conflict with their peers. They learn the biblical principles underlying the practice such as reconciliation, salvation,

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<sup>45</sup> Work & Economics) Whelchel, Hugh (Institute for Faith, "All Things New: Rediscovering the Four-Chapter Gospel" (McLean, VA: Institute for Faith, Work & Economics, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Chris Marshall, "Divine Justice as Restorative Justice," *Center for Christian Ethics*, 2012, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Marshall, "Divine Justice as Restorative Justice", 15.

<sup>48</sup> Marshall, "Divine Justice as Restorative Justice", 15–18.

<sup>49</sup>"What Is Christian Education?," accessed December 9, 2019, <https://www.cen.edu.au/index.php/shortcode/what-is-christian-education>.

*shalom*. Discipline problems turn into valued teachable moments. When broken relations are restored, conflicts are reconciled, hurts are healed, then schools are transformed to be a caring community, *shalom* is endowed to school.

The growing interest of implementing restorative justice at schools results in the increasing number of educators write about restorative justice in education both the theory and implementation. This article does not elaborate much on this, however, the references listed at the end of the article contains some fundamental books on restorative justice for further reading.

## Conclusion

Christian schools face greater and greater challenges nowadays because of the deteriorating values and characters among young people. Hence the responsibility to teach them how to see the world through God's eye is even more relevant than before. One important aspect of this is the discipline approach, and the only approach that is biblical is restorative justice.

It is developed by Christian educators, law practitioners, and theologians, based on sound theology and practical experiences. When public square shows great interest in restorative justice, it is only logical for Christian schools not only to show interest but to implement it as part of the Bible integration in their daily practices.

Though the approach is still relatively new, the literature on this subject are widely available ranging from theory to the applications, strictly biblical to secular approach. Educators started to try the approach and share their experiences and findings. The purpose of this article is to urge the community of faith, especially Christian schools, to join the movement that will transform the way people see justice – students see discipline. Christian educators must constantly and consistently live their lives and teach their students according to the Bible. By utilizing the principles, Christian educators should be able to bring into realization the education mandate of Scripture. Therefore, adopting restorative justice for Christian schools is imperative.

However, further research to find best practices to implement restorative justice in school is urgent. Theorist should also make the concepts clearer and precise for education context to avoid practitioner derail from what is intended to, correcting the misconceptions.

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