

America's Forgotten Classroom (Part 1): Why America Must Go Back to School to Go Forward into The Future!

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Opening The Door: The Classroom America Forgot

As children and grandchildren go back to school this fall, CrossFire USA (www.CrossFireUSA.org) is going back to school with them. Not to memorize the slogans of the age. Not to kneel before every fashionable theory blown through the modern academy. Not to pretend America's crisis is merely political, economic, technological, or generational. We are going back to school because a nation that forgets how its children were once formed should not be shocked when those children no longer understand liberty, truth, duty, conscience, history, or God.

This fall, *The CrossFire Courier* begins a new investigative series called *America's Forgotten Classroom: How Scripture, Virtue, Liberty, And Christian Education Built The American Mind*. The argument of this series is direct, historically grounded, and urgently needed: the American classroom was never merely about information. It was about formation. It was meant to form readers, citizens, consciences, families, and souls under God. The schoolhouse did not

replace the family; at its best, it complemented the family by reinforcing the moral, biblical, civic, and intellectual architecture that fathers, mothers, churches, and communities were already expected to cultivate.

That older understanding has largely vanished from public memory. Many parents and grandparents were never taught it. Many pastors and teachers were trained around it rather than in it. Many students have inherited a country whose monuments remain standing, but whose moral vocabulary has been stripped from the classroom. They know the language of rights, but not always the Source of rights. They hear the word freedom, but are rarely taught the virtue required to sustain freedom. They inherit the blessings of a republic while too often being taught to distrust, diminish, or despise the moral soil from which that republic grew.

The Founding generation understood what modern education often forgets: liberty is not self-sustaining. A free republic requires more than laws, elections, courts, constitutions, and patriotic symbols. It requires formed people—men and women who have been taught what freedom is, where it comes from, what it requires, and why it cannot survive when severed from truth and virtue.

That is where the classroom becomes more than a room with desks, books, lessons, and exams. The classroom becomes a battleground for the soul of a people. It teaches children what to honor and what to mock, what to remember and what to forget, what to obey and what to resist, what to call good and what to call evil. No classroom is neutral because no vision of the human person is neutral. Every generation is being formed toward something. The only question is whether that formation leads toward God, wisdom, ordered liberty, and moral courage, or toward confusion, appetite, resentment, and control.

This is why America's educational crisis cannot be solved merely by better technology, larger budgets, newer buildings, higher test standards, or another round of political promises. Those things may have their place, but they cannot replace moral formation. A child may learn to calculate and still not know justice. A student may learn to code and still not know truth. A graduate may possess credentials and still lack wisdom. Education becomes dangerous when it sharpens the mind while leaving the conscience untrained.

America's older classroom, for all its imperfections, understood that reading was connected to responsibility, knowledge was connected to virtue, liberty was connected to restraint, and citizenship was connected to accountability before God. It did not imagine that children could be formed into free people by accident. It assumed they had to be taught, corrected, disciplined, encouraged, inspired, and rooted in a moral universe larger than themselves. That is the classroom America forgot, and that is the classroom this series will investigate.

This investigation will take us into school laws, primers, sermons, presidential proclamations, founding documents, dictionaries, readers, universities, covenants, and battlefield moments where ideas became action. We will examine the Puritan concern for biblical literacy, the New England Primer's realistic view of human nature, Washington's warning that religion and morality are indispensable to political prosperity, Webster's battle for words, McGuffey's moral readers, Jefferson's conviction that education must guard liberty against ignorance and tyranny,

and the Northwest Ordinance's remarkable union of religion, morality, knowledge, good government, human happiness, schools, and education.

That is why America must go back to school before it can go forward. Not backward into nostalgia. Not backward into pretending our history was sinless. But backward in the only sense that wise people return to foundations after a building begins to crack. When the walls lean, the answer is not more paint. When the roof sags, the answer is not better slogans. When the nation forgets how free people are formed, the answer is recovery.



The Present Crisis: When A Nation Forgets How To Teach

The need for this series is not theoretical. It is not merely the concern of pastors, historians, parents, grandparents, homeschool families, or Christian educators. Current polling and national testing show that Americans themselves know something has gone deeply wrong in education, even when they disagree about the causes.

A Gallup and Walton Family Foundation poll released in September 2026 found that only **32 percent** of American adults were satisfied with the quality of K–12 education in the United States, the lowest level in Gallup's twenty-seven-year trend; AP's report on the same poll noted that dissatisfaction had climbed to **67 percent**. That is not a small tremor beneath the schoolhouse. It is a national warning bell. (Sources: [Gallup — Satisfaction With K–12 Education Hits New Low](#); [AP — Americans' Satisfaction With Schools Is At A Low Point](#))

The academic data is no more comforting. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that, in 2024, the average reading score for American twelfth-graders was lower than in 2019 and **10 points lower** than the first reading assessment in 1992. The same report found

that **32 percent** of twelfth-graders performed below the NAEP Basic level in reading. That means the crisis is not merely a matter of partisan perception. It is visible in the nation's own academic measurements. (Source: [The Nation's Report Card — Grade 12 Reading, 2024 National Trends](#))

In mathematics, the same national testing crisis was just as sobering. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that **45 percent** of twelfth-grade students performed below the NAEP Basic level in mathematics in 2024, five percentage points higher than both 2019 and 2005. That means the crisis is not only moral and spiritual. It is also intellectual, practical, civic, and measurable. A nation cannot train the next generation for self-government, work, family, citizenship, and wise moral judgment if it is failing to teach them how to read, reason, calculate, and think. (Source: [The Nation's Report Card — Grade 12 Mathematics, 2024 National Trends](#))

And yet, this series will argue that the crisis is deeper than falling test scores. America is not only producing too many weak readers. It is producing too many untethered souls. It is not only failing to transmit skills. It is failing to transmit meaning. It is not only confused about curriculum. It is confused about the human person, moral truth, the purpose of liberty, the role of the family, the place of Scripture, the need for virtue, and the God before whom every generation stands accountable.

The religious landscape confirms the same fracture. Pew Research Center's 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study found that **62 percent** of American adults now identify as Christian, down from **78 percent** in 2007, while **29 percent** identify as religiously unaffiliated, up from **16 percent** in 2007. Those numbers do not merely describe church attendance patterns. They describe a civilizational memory problem. (Source: [Pew Research Center — Decline Of Christianity In The U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off](#))

The civic memory problem is just as real. The 2025 Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey found that **70 percent** of American adults could name all three branches of government, but only **48 percent** named freedom of religion as a First Amendment right. A nation that forgets the first freedom will eventually misunderstand all the others. (Source: [Annenberg Public Policy Center — Americans' Knowledge Of Civics Increases, Annenberg Survey Finds](#))

The deeper danger is that these declines are converging at the same time. Academic weakness, religious disaffiliation, civic forgetfulness, family breakdown, and moral confusion are not isolated problems sealed off from one another. They are symptoms of a larger formation crisis. When children are not taught to read well, they lose access to the great texts. When they are not taught history honestly, they lose memory. When they are not taught moral truth, they lose discernment. When they are not taught that liberty rests under God, they may inherit freedom as a slogan while lacking the wisdom and virtue required to preserve it.

The conclusion is unavoidable. America's problem is not merely that children need better test preparation. America's problem is that generations have been educated inside a system increasingly unsure what education is for. When God is removed from the moral architecture, liberty becomes appetite. When virtue is removed from citizenship, rights become weapons. When the family is displaced by the state, children become experiments. When Scripture is

treated as a relic instead of a lamp, the classroom may still have screens, devices, labs, credentials, and degrees, but it no longer knows how to form wisdom.



The Forgotten Date: When The United Colonies Became The United States

The first lesson begins with a date most Americans have never been taught to mark: **September 9, 1776**. On that day, the Continental Congress resolved that the name “United Colonies” should be replaced with “United States.” In one stroke of language, America was no longer merely describing a rebellion of colonies against a crown. She was naming herself as a people. (Source: [Founders Online — Journals Of The Continental Congress, Monday, September 9, 1776](#))

That may sound like a technical change, but names matter. Language forms memory. Memory forms identity. Identity forms duty. When Congress adopted the language of the “United States,” the new nation was not simply editing its paperwork. It was stepping into a new moral responsibility. The Declaration had already appealed to the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” confessed that human beings are “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” and closed with a mutual pledge of lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. (Source: [National Archives — The Declaration Of Independence](#))

This is why the September 9 hook is so important for the opening issue of **America’s Forgotten Classroom**. A nation that names itself must also teach its children what that name means. “United States” is not merely geography. It is not merely a federal arrangement. It is not merely a bureaucratic title stamped on documents. It is a political and moral claim that free people can

live together under law, virtue, restraint, covenantal obligation, ordered liberty, and accountability to the Creator.

But such a people does not appear by accident. A republic does not preserve itself automatically. Free citizens are not mass-produced by entertainment, resentment, government programs, activist slogans, social media, or technological convenience. They must be formed. They must be taught to read. They must be taught to tell the truth. They must be taught to restrain themselves. They must be taught that rights come from God, not government. They must be taught that liberty without virtue eventually devours itself.

The word **United** carried a burden no army, congress, or constitution could carry by itself. To become the United States, the people would need more than shared enemies and shared grievances. They would need shared memory, shared moral assumptions, shared habits of self-restraint, and a shared understanding that liberty was not merely escape from British rule but responsibility before God. In that sense, September 9, 1776 was not only a political naming. It was a classroom moment. A people had to learn what their own name required.

The tragedy of modern America is that we still use the name while forgetting the formation that made the name possible. We still say “United States,” but we often educate as though unity is impossible, truth is relative, virtue is oppressive, the family is optional, religion is private sentiment, and the human person is self-created. That kind of classroom cannot long sustain the civilization it inherited.



The Original Classroom: Formation Before Workforce Training

America's older classroom was not perfect, and no honest Christian historian needs to pretend it was. There were sins, blind spots, exclusions, hypocrisies, and failures that must be faced truthfully. But facing those failures honestly is not the same as erasing the moral and spiritual architecture that helped form the American mind.

The older classroom assumed that children were not merely future employees. They were future citizens. They were future fathers and mothers. They were future neighbors, church members, voters, jurors, soldiers, merchants, magistrates, farmers, pastors, craftsmen, and leaders. They needed literacy, but literacy had a purpose. They needed knowledge, but knowledge was accountable to wisdom. They needed freedom, but freedom was inseparable from virtue. They needed self-government, but self-government required a conscience trained under God.

That is why early American education cannot be understood apart from Scripture, sermons, catechisms, primers, prayer, family instruction, moral discipline, and civic formation. The classroom served a larger vision of the human person. Children were precious because they were made in the image of God. Children were morally needy because they were fallen sinners. Children required love, correction, truth, memory, example, and grace. Education was not merely the transfer of data into young minds. It was the shaping of loves, loyalties, habits, duties, affections, and moral imagination.

The family stood at the center of this formation. The schoolhouse did not exist to replace father, mother, table, Bible, church, and pulpit. It existed to reinforce what those God-given institutions were already called to teach. That is one reason our modern confusion is so dangerous. When the state or the cultural elite begins acting as though children belong first to the system rather than to God and their parents, the classroom becomes something very different from education. It becomes catechism in another religion.

Even Thomas Jefferson, whose theology must be handled carefully and never confused with historic Christian orthodoxy, understood that ignorance was an enemy of liberty. His educational vision was not as biblically rich as the Puritan school law, the Reformation classroom, the New England Primer, or the McGuffey Readers, but he still recognized a truth many modern elites have forgotten: a free republic cannot remain free if its people are left uneducated, easily manipulated, and untrained for self-government.

Jefferson's witness matters in this series precisely because it shows that even beyond the explicitly Christian schoolhouse, serious Founding-era thinkers knew education was not merely private career preparation. It was public formation for liberty. Jefferson's **Bill For The More General Diffusion Of Knowledge** argued that even good forms of government can become corrupted and that one remedy was to illuminate the minds of the people through education. (Source: [Founders Online — Jefferson's Bill For The More General Diffusion Of Knowledge, 1779](#))

America's older model understood something our age desperately needs to recover: every classroom disciplines. Every curriculum forms. Every lesson teaches not only facts but loves. Every institution passes down a vision of reality. The only question is whether that vision is true.



The Great Exchange: From Formation to Fragmentation

At some point, America began exchanging formation for fragmentation. The shift did not happen all at once, and this series will trace parts of that story carefully. But the broad movement is plain enough. Scripture moved from the center to the margins. Prayer moved from public habit to legal suspicion. Moral instruction was increasingly detached from theological truth. Virtue was recoded as subjective values. Liberty was separated from restraint. Rights were severed from the Creator. Parents were increasingly treated as obstacles when they refused to surrender their children to the assumptions of the age.

This did not make the classroom neutral. That is one of the great myths of modern education. Removing Scripture does not produce neutrality. It produces a new authority. Removing God does not make education objective. It installs another god, often the state, the self, the expert class, the ideology of the moment, or the appetites of the student. Removing moral absolutes does not free children from indoctrination. It merely hides the indoctrination behind words like inclusion, progress, tolerance, autonomy, or equity.

This is why the modern classroom can teach children to question everything except the assumptions of the modern classroom. It can teach suspicion toward the Bible while treating secular theories as settled wisdom. It can warn against religious dogma while enforcing ideological dogmas of its own. It can speak endlessly about freedom while training students to fear disagreement, distrust their inherited faith, and view moral boundaries as oppression.

The result is a generation with more access to information than any generation in history, but often less rootedness, less reading stamina, less historical memory, less moral clarity, and less capacity for ordered liberty. They can search the world in seconds, but many have not been

taught what the world is for. They can access every opinion, but many have not been taught how to recognize truth. They can communicate instantly, but many have not been taught to commune with God, honor their parents, serve their neighbor, or govern their own passions.

The danger is not merely that students may disagree with their parents or question inherited beliefs. Honest questions are part of real learning. The danger is that many are being trained to inherit suspicion without wisdom, freedom without restraint, compassion without truth, identity without creation, and rights without responsibility. A Christian view of education does not fear hard questions, but it does insist that questions be asked inside a moral universe where truth exists, God reigns, parents matter, conscience must be formed, and liberty must be governed by virtue rather than appetite.

That exchange has been costly. A civilization can survive poverty, war, and political division longer than it can survive the collapse of formation. Once the classroom forgets the soul, the nation eventually forgets itself.



The Investigation Ahead: Following The Evidence Back To The Schoolhouse

This series, “America’s Forgotten Classroom,” will not be a sentimental tour through old books and forgotten dates. It will be an investigation. We will follow the evidence through founding documents, early school laws, primers, sermons, presidential proclamations, college rules, dictionaries, readers, compacts, ordinances, and battlefield moments where ideas became action.

We will examine Washington's Farewell Address and his warning that religion and morality are indispensable supports of political prosperity. We will ask whether a nation can preserve oaths, justice, property, reputation, life, and liberty once religious obligation is mocked as irrelevant to public life. (Source: [Founders Online — Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796](#))

We will revisit the First Amendment and challenge the modern distortion that treats religious liberty as if it means forced secularism. The amendment forbade Congress from establishing a national church and protected the free exercise of religion; it did not command Americans to pretend that God, Scripture, conscience, and worship were irrelevant to public life. (Source: [National Archives — The Bill Of Rights: A Transcription](#))

We will walk into Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation of October 3, 1789, where gratitude was not treated as a vague civic mood but as a moral act directed toward Almighty God. We will ask what happens to a people who inherit blessings, forget the Blessor, and then call their ingratitude enlightenment. (Source: [Founders Online — Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 3, 1789](#))

We will examine the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647, where early New England identified ignorance of Scripture as a danger so serious that literacy itself became spiritual warfare. That law may shock modern ears, but it reveals something crucial: earlier Americans often believed reading was not merely a career skill; it was a defense against deception. (Source: [Mass.gov — Old Deluder Satan Law Of 1647](#))

We will open the New England Primer, where children learned the alphabet inside a biblical worldview that took human nature seriously. We will see how original sin, discipline, repentance, grace, and moral realism shaped a classroom very different from the sentimental optimism of modern progressive education. (Sources: [Library Of Congress — The New-England Primer Improved](#); [Library Of Congress — Page From The New England Primer Improved, Letters A Through F](#))

We will visit the holy roots of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, not to pretend those institutions never changed, but to ask how institutions drift. The most sobering lesson may not be that elite schools changed. It may be that churches, families, ministries, and nations drift the same way when doctrine, leadership, worship, curriculum, and mission are no longer guarded. (Source: [Colonial Society Of Massachusetts — Harvard College Records: College Book I](#))

We will follow the Reformation classroom and ask why Bibles, literacy, preaching, conscience, family instruction, and liberty belong together. When Scripture is chained, people become dependent on gatekeepers. When Scripture is opened, conscience awakens, families are equipped, pulpits are strengthened, and ordinary people learn to stand before God. (Sources: [Library Of Congress — Martin Luther As Priest, Heretic, And Outlaw](#); [Library Of Congress — Ninety-Five Theses](#))

We will study Noah Webster and the battle for words, because modern culture does not merely argue against Christianity. It redefines the words Christians use: justice, liberty, marriage, rights, equality, education, love, tolerance, hate, and truth. A people who surrender language will

eventually surrender law, memory, morality, and worship. (Source: [Webster's Dictionary 1828 — Education](#))

We will return to the McGuffey Readers and expose the myth of value-neutral education. Every curriculum teaches children what to love, what to mock, what to honor, what to excuse, and what to become. The only question is whether the formation is truthful, virtuous, and accountable to God. (Sources: [Ohio University — McGuffey Readers](#); [Smithsonian — McGuffey's Second Eclectic Reader](#))

We will then bring Thomas Jefferson into the investigation, not as a model theologian, but as a founding-era witness to the connection between education and liberty. Jefferson's university vision and his earlier proposals for public education reveal how seriously he believed ignorance could endanger republican government. That issue will allow us to ask a question modern America can no longer evade: are our schools forming citizens capable of self-government, or are they producing people increasingly dependent on experts, bureaucracies, ideologies, and the state? (Source: [Founders Online — Rockfish Gap Report Of The University Of Virginia Commissioners, 1818](#))

From there, we will examine the Northwest Ordinance, one of the strongest founding-era witnesses in the entire series, because it explicitly connects religion, morality, knowledge, good government, human happiness, schools, and education. That federal blueprint directly challenges the modern myth that the Founders intended education to become aggressively secular, morally weightless, or hostile to the religious convictions of the people. (Source: [National Archives — Northwest Ordinance](#))

We will also examine the Mayflower Compact, Thanksgiving memory, Phi Beta Kappa, Thomas Paine's "summer soldiers and sunshine patriots," and Washington crossing the Delaware, because the classroom must eventually produce action. Education that never becomes courage is unfinished. Learning that never becomes obedience is incomplete. A Christian education that produces spectators but not faithful men and women in the cold, dark waters of real life has failed its final exam.

What will emerge across these weeks is not a random collection of antique documents, forgotten schoolbooks, and patriotic memories. It is a pattern. The older American classroom joined reading to responsibility, liberty to virtue, knowledge to moral truth, gratitude to God, and citizenship to self-government. It assumed that children were not blank slates to be captured by the latest ideology, but souls to be instructed, consciences to be formed, minds to be sharpened, and future citizens to be prepared for freedom under God. That is why this investigation matters now. We are not merely asking what America once taught. We are asking what America has forgotten—and what must be recovered before the next generation inherits a vocabulary of freedom without the moral architecture to understand it.

The investigation ahead is not merely about what America used to teach. It is about what kind of people America once believed must be formed if liberty was to survive.



The Family Classroom: Parents And Grandparents Must Reenter The Story

This opening lesson must speak directly to parents and grandparents because the recovery of America's forgotten classroom cannot be outsourced. Washington cannot do this for us. Congress cannot do this for us. Jefferson's university cannot do this for us. A curriculum company cannot do this for us. A school board cannot do this for us. A pastor cannot do this alone from the pulpit one hour a week. The recovery must begin where God placed the first classroom: the home.

Parents and grandparents should not hear this series as condemnation but as invitation. Many were never taught these things. Many grew up in schools that still had fragments of the older moral order but not the full architecture. Many learned American history as a list of wars, presidents, dates, and amendments, but never saw how Scripture, virtue, literacy, covenant, gratitude, conscience, and ordered liberty worked together. Many inherited patriotic affection without being given the theological and moral roots beneath it.

That means this series is recovery work. It is an invitation to learn what was hidden, neglected, softened, distorted, or forgotten. It is an invitation to read with children and grandchildren, to discuss these issues around the table, to ask what their schools are teaching, to compare modern assumptions with primary sources, and to reintroduce the next generation to the moral language of freedom.

Educational historian **Lawrence A. Cremin**, one of the leading scholars of American educational history, warned against reducing education to formal schooling alone. His broader view of

education included the many agencies that form children and culture, not merely the school system, and Columbia notes that he helped move the study of American education beyond school-centered analysis by examining the other institutions that educate children. That matters profoundly for this series because America's older classroom was never confined to a schoolhouse. It included the family, the church, the pulpit, the Bible, the community, the apprenticeship, the printed word, and the habits of daily life. (Source: [Columbia 250 — Lawrence Arthur Cremin](#))

This is especially urgent because children are always being disciplined by someone. They are disciplined by screens, celebrities, algorithms, peers, teachers, textbooks, entertainment, activists, advertisers, and influencers. The question is not whether children will be formed. The question is who will form them, toward what end, by what authority, and under whose lordship.

Christian parents and grandparents cannot afford to be passive. Love requires more than providing devices, activities, vacations, tuition, and sports schedules. Love also requires memory. Love requires truth. Love requires catechesis. Love requires courage. Love requires teaching children not only how to make a living, but how to live before God.



Application: How To Begin Rebuilding The Classroom At Home

The **first application** is simple: begin with memory. Ask your children and grandchildren what they know about America's founding, the Declaration, the First Amendment, Washington's Farewell Address, the Mayflower Compact, the New England Primer, the McGuffey Readers,

Jefferson's educational vision, and the role of Scripture in early American education. Do not ask as an examiner trying to embarrass them. Ask as a guide trying to open a door.

The **second application** is to read primary sources together. Do not merely trust what modern interpreters say about America. Read the words. Read the Declaration. Read Washington's Farewell Address. Read the Bill of Rights. Read the Thanksgiving Proclamation. Read the Northwest Ordinance. Read enough of the Old Deluder Satan Act to see how differently earlier Americans understood literacy. Let children and grandchildren hear the older language for themselves.

The **third application** is to restore moral vocabulary in ordinary family life. Use words like truth, virtue, duty, conscience, repentance, gratitude, honor, self-government, courage, modesty, justice, mercy, wisdom, freedom and reverence. Explain them. Model them. Correct them when they are distorted. A culture that loses moral vocabulary loses moral vision.

The **fourth application** is to ask what every classroom is forming. When reviewing a school, curriculum, book, film, lesson, or policy, do not ask only whether it is academically competent. Ask what it teaches children to love. Ask what it teaches them to mock. Ask what it treats as sacred. Ask what it treats as shameful. Ask what kind of person it assumes the child is. Ask whether it points toward God, truth, virtue, and ordered liberty, or toward self-creation, grievance, appetite, and state-managed morality.

The **fifth application** is to bring Scripture back to the center of formation. This does not mean every lesson becomes a sermon. It means Christian families must recover the confidence that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Children need more than academic achievement. They need a moral universe. They need a Creator. They need a Redeemer. They need commandments, grace, forgiveness, discipline, worship, and hope. They need to know that liberty is not the right to invent themselves, but the duty and privilege of living truthfully before God.

The **sixth application** is to invite others into the recovery. Send this series to your children, grandchildren, pastor, teacher, homeschool group, school board member, and church friends. Use it as a conversation starter. Use it as a family reading project. Use it to ask whether your own home is reinforcing the moral architecture you hope America will recover.

Start small, but start deliberately. Choose one evening a week to recover one forgotten lesson, read one primary source paragraph, define one moral word, or ask one question that helps your children and grandchildren connect liberty to truth, virtue, family, Scripture, and God. The point is not to turn the home into a lecture hall. The point is to turn ordinary family life back into a classroom of memory, wisdom, gratitude, and courage.

The application is not complicated, but it is demanding. America's forgotten classroom will not be recovered by outrage alone. It will be recovered by fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, pastors and teachers, churches and families, who decide that the next generation must not inherit a country whose freedoms they can no longer explain.



The Firepoint: A Republic Cannot Preserve What It No Longer Forms

The central firepoint of this opening issue is this: before America can go forward, she must remember what formed her. A republic cannot preserve liberty if it forgets how free people are formed.

That statement is not nostalgia. It is political realism. The Founders understood that human beings are not angels. They understood ambition, corruption, faction, appetite, pride, cowardice, and tyranny. Their constitutional design assumed that human nature required checks and balances. But the written Constitution was never meant to carry the whole moral burden of the nation. A Constitution can restrain government, but it cannot by itself make a people virtuous.

That is why the classroom mattered. That is why the family mattered. That is why churches mattered. That is why literacy mattered. That is why Scripture mattered. That is why Thanksgiving mattered. That is why words mattered. That is why moral readers mattered. That is why covenant mattered. That is why Jefferson's warning about ignorance mattered, even though Jefferson himself did not supply the fullest Christian foundation for education. The American experiment required more than legal machinery. It required formed souls.

When modern America tries to keep liberty while discarding the God who grounds rights, the virtue that restrains appetite, the family that forms conscience, and the Scripture that teaches moral truth, it is trying to harvest fruit after cutting the roots. That experiment cannot succeed forever.

The question now is whether enough Americans still have the courage to recover what was forgotten.



For The Future: The Blackboard Is Still There

The future of America will not be decided only in Washington, D.C. It will be decided in kitchens, classrooms, churches, libraries, living rooms, family devotions, school board meetings, homeschool co-ops, Christian schools, dinner conversations, and the quiet courage of parents and grandparents who refuse to surrender the next generation.

The blackboard is still there. The Bible is still open. The primary sources can still be read. The forgotten lessons can still be recovered. Children can still be taught to read deeply, think clearly, pray honestly, give thanks humbly, honor their parents, love their country rightly, resist tyranny courageously, confess sin truthfully, and understand liberty under God.

America does not need another generation trained merely to pass tests, chase credentials, repeat slogans, and inherit freedoms they cannot define. America needs a generation formed for truth, virtue, gratitude, courage, self-government, biblical wisdom, and faithful action. That kind of formation will not happen accidentally. It must be recovered deliberately.

So, as children go back to school this fall, CrossFire is going back to school with them. We are returning to America's forgotten classroom by walking from the family table to the schoolhouse, from the pulpit to the primer, from Washington's Farewell Address to Jefferson's university vision, from Webster's dictionary to McGuffey's moral readers, from the Northwest Ordinance to the frozen Delaware. Along the way, we will ask what formed the American mind—and what

must be recovered if our children and grandchildren are to inherit liberty with enough wisdom, virtue, courage, and faith to preserve it.

This is where the series begins, and the first assignment is memory. Before America can teach the future, she must recover the classroom she forgot. Before our children can defend liberty, they must know what liberty is, where it came from, why it requires virtue, and why virtue cannot survive for long when severed from truth, family, Scripture, and God.

Coming Next Saturday In The CrossFire Courier!

Washington's Farewell Address: Religion, Morality, And The Myth of Secular Virtue

Next Saturday, **America's Forgotten Classroom** moves from the schoolhouse to one of the most important final warnings ever given by the Father of our Country. And the timing is no accident. We are placing this issue here because **September 19** marks the date Washington's Farewell Address was published in 1796—his parting counsel to the nation he had helped lead through revolution, independence, war, constitutional government, and the fragile birth of the American republic.

Modern America often wants Washington as a marble statue, a battlefield hero, or a safe patriotic symbol. But next Saturday, we will meet Washington the teacher—Washington the watchman—Washington the aging father of a young republic who looked beyond the celebrations of independence and warned America about the hidden supports that would have to remain in place if liberty was going to survive.

Before George Washington left public life, he gave America more than a farewell. He gave the nation **a final classroom lesson** on the moral architecture required to keep liberty alive. His words were not delivered as the shallow sentiment of a retiring politician, but as the seasoned warning of a commander, statesman, and national father who knew that independence could be won on a battlefield, but liberty could only be preserved by a people formed in virtue.

His *Farewell Address* contains one of the most sobering questions any Founder ever placed before the nation, and it still reaches into our courts, classrooms, families, churches, elections, and consciences today.

Next week, we will ask and answer the question our culture rarely wants to face honestly: **Can America keep justice, truth, rights, family, ordered liberty, and self-government after severing them from the God who grounds moral obligation?** Or has our nation tried to preserve the fruit while cutting away the root?

Don't miss next Saturday's issue of *The CrossFire Courier*, as we step inside Washington's final classroom and recover one of the most urgent lessons America has forgotten.

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Step inside **America's Forgotten Classroom**—because the lessons America forgot may be the very lessons our children and grandchildren most desperately need.

