

A Free Education – *John 8:31-36*

Introduction - There is nothing “free” about our free government schools. Simply look at the perverse taxes we pay per child being educated in the system. Far worse, consider the expense of the secularization and paganization of the culture which is the fruit of such a system and the deeply religious views that form the system. Christians must reclaim and recover the call to the “*paideia*” of the Lord (Eph 6:4), the enculturalization of an entire worldview into the entire being of a pupil. Then, Christians must patiently pray for and labor towards a path for the nation to pursue a true, liberated life of discipleship under the Lord Jesus Christ.

An Education that is Freedom (John 8:31-32) – Certainly, this is a verse pointing to salvation from sin through faith in Jesus Christ; forgiveness of sins and the release from sin’s hold on the one who turns to Christ. It is about how to get to heaven when you die. Certainly, as well, that is the first and foundational point Jesus is making. Unfortunately, for most modern Christians, this is all it means, with little bearing on what it means about how we are therefore to live today. But Jesus is saying far more than a message of salvation unto heaven; He is proclaiming heavenly liberty in order to finally be human (Isaiah 66:1). Let me set up what will be expounded on later with a few observations of words from these verses.

Disciples – The Greek word means a student or learner, and implied a direct dependence of the one under instruction upon an authority of superior knowledge. This personal attachment shaped the whole life of the one described as a disciple. There is not a square inch of your existence that is not under the Lordship of Jesus.

Abiding in God’s Word – Dwelling there, and from there, taking in all information about the world through the lens of scripture, is the only way to be a faithful disciple. But more than simple propositions, abiding in God-Who-Is-the-Word is part of a living and personal relationship in Him that is to affect our mind, will, emotions, and the way we experience all of life.

Truth – Jesus is the truth. True education is all in Jesus and so all education is either for or against Christ. There is no neutrality when it comes to truth; there is no relativism. But this truth, this education, when received, sets us free.

Liberty – Education is the pursuit of truth. In this sense, true education sets us free, and this is the basis for understanding a Christian liberal arts education. More on that in a bit.

Who Says We’re in Bondage? (John 8:33-36) – Verse 33 is a strange reply by a people who had been enslaved by Egypt, the Philistines, the Assyrians and Babylonians, and were even then subjects under Roman rule. But oftentimes, slaves do not realize they are slaves. Oftentimes slaves reside in their master’s home and find enough creature comforts to keep them from pursuing liberty. Slavery to sin does this to mankind, and so we think we have liberty if we can smoke pot and fornicate in any way we please. And when it comes to pursuing truth, slavery to sin causes us to think we have liberty if we are free to not bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5)

Christian Education, the Liberal Arts, and Discipleship in Truth and Freedom – Disciples of Christ are forbidden from compartmentalizing our *paideia* (education) into Christian and non-Christian categories, or into spiritual and non-spiritual categories. The classical University modelled this, placing all subjects/colleges under one “universe” governed by the Queen of Sciences, theology.

When Paul tells fathers to *paideia* their children in Eph 6:4, he is not simply imposing the Greek concept of *paideia*. He is, in essence, asserting the command given by the God of Abraham and Moses to those who are now disciples of Jesus Christ. Same God, same command (the Septuagint uses *paideia* in Deuteronomy and Proverbs).

For Christendom to be recovered and to flourish, this type of thinking about the education of our children must be embraced and practiced. It is the principled application of what Moses commands in Deut 6 and Paul reiterates in the command to *paideia* our children in the Lord.

With Another New School Year – There is so much to read, to research, to study and consider when it comes to understanding and developing the *paideia* of God for your children and for the country. School is now in session. Therefore...

Champion Christian Liberal Education – Whether you are directly involved in educating your children or other children, or only indirectly watching and praying, make it your aim to champion the *paideia* of God. Let us find more ways to support Christian education and Christian educators who get this. It is the only way we will train Christians to be leaders of a society and culture- and to be so as Christians, as disciples, as men and women set free.

Understand that *Paideia* is Hard, even Painful – *Paideia* is not only translated “train” but “discipline” (Heb 12:5-11). This is because to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is hard work. There is a cross to bear. And part of that cross-bearing is the work of disciplining and training your mind so that you are able to love God with all of it. Let me be more direct: school should be hard.

Education Does Not Set You Free; the Truth Sets You Free – We are not saying that education is our savior (as some theological “liberals” would say). To come to Jesus Christ in faith is the only way to salvation. Becoming smarter never guarantees getting closer to Jesus; in fact, sometimes, just the opposite will occur.

True Liberty Spawns True Education – And so it goes both ways. When we are disciples indeed, as Jesus says, then we are indeed His disciples. Christians must reclaim and recover the call to the *paideia* of the Lord, the enculturalization of an entire worldview into the entire being of every disciple.