

The Fight for Christian Education – 2020

Introduction - I have been directly involved in Christian Education for over 30 years, as a pastor, a parent, a student, a teacher, and a board member of several schools. While the movement in home schooling and the Classical Christian Schools is fabulous, we are just beginning to “recover the lost tools of learning” and to “repair the ruins.” Some of the results of our work have been breathtakingly spectacular, but there have been many crashes as well. We have to understand that we are in a great war, a spiritual battle, and the soul of the next generation is at stake. “*Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*” (Gal 6:9). May I suggest that if you are not directly involved in Christian education today that you commit to pray specifically for those you know who are, and that you consider ways in which you might support the work going on in homes and schools that are serving the kingdom of which you are a citizen? And let me admonish you against becoming the “Monday morning quarterback” criticizing the imperfect work going on (we already know it’s imperfect) and instead figure out how you can roll up your sleeves and help.

The Texts –

Proverbs 1:7 - *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

The way God made the world, denial of God and the lack of fear and reverence for Him leads to insanity, also called foolishness. When we fear the LORD, so much of the world He made makes more and more sense and we are on the path of reigning with Christ, the New Man, over all of it.

Proverbs 22:6 - *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

This is a proverb, teachings of the ways things tend to go in this world created by God and overseen by Him. This proverb is rooted in deep promises for believing parents, promises for their covenant children. The promises and the training go together.

Ephesians 6:4 - *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

Our church has studied this verse multiple times. The “training” is the “paideia” of the Lord. If we understand what this word means, it follows that this verse commands a Christian education.

Matthew 18:6 - *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

If we give our children over to be taught by unbelievers with a curriculum that denies the authority of Jesus Christ over all subjects while mentoring (grooming) them towards moral relativism, and then they fall away from the Lord, we are not going to want to stand before the Lord to give an account. That will not be a good day.

Neutrality? - It is mind-boggling how many Christian parents put their children in government schools thinking that those schools are basically “religiously neutral,” that facts are taught there which can then be brought home where we can add our own religious condiments on top. They refuse to see that they are allowing their children to be taught the tenets of another religion. In these schools, children learn that every subject of study can be taught well without any reference to the Lord of that subject – in fact, in far too many churches, they have already been taught that the Lord Jesus Christ is not the Lord of math, science, history, or music. Our government schools are full of naïve Christian kids because our churches are teaching naivete. And by the way, naïve is really just a nice way of saying gullible.

In this secular-humanistic, relativistic society, we are reaping what we have sown (Hos 8:7), and we are reaping a whirlwind of relativism. Amoral (so-called) sex education classes abound and then we were distressed when the kids all start sleeping around. I say we “were” distressed because now, a few generations into this, we think that “they can’t help themselves,” abstinence teaching is useless and possibly even unhealthy, but we will hand out free condoms and the phone numbers to the nearest abortion mills. Seriously. I’m not making this up. If there is no fixed standard for sexual morality then later, when a boy is charged with date-rape, why is anyone surprised? C.S Lewis rightly said, “we laugh at honor and then are shocked to find traitors in our midst.”

The Big Lie about Facts – We think that we can teach two-plus-two equals four whether there is a god in our system or not. Without getting into philosophy and apologetics too much, don't you see that there is a god, a faith-principle, in that sentence? Christian, why does $2+2=4$? Because Jesus is Lord and in Him all things consist (Col 1:17). Without God, there is no two. Two what? And could America have declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776 AD without God the Creator? There would not have been an America or the land it claimed and what would anno domini mean?

When we deny the Creation story of Genesis and instead insert a Darwinist/evolution/old earth/materialism worldview, there are all kinds of ramifications downstream. If it turns out that all we are is the result of pieces of random matter smashing into each other and forming things over time, and if it is just chance that we have any sense of "living" or "thinking" or "being," then it is only another random experiment to declare that any of us bags of chemicals have "rights." There is nothing to stop any opinion or preference. Violence is actually the way evolution works; the survival of the fittest is simply a nice way of saying that bullies rule and win. Millenia of nature, red in tooth and claw, paves the way for racism, eugenics, mass genocide, and cultural despair.

When we deny that God created Man in His image, male and female He created them, and we mix that denial with evolution, then any form of sexual identity and activity is fair game. "Fair" doesn't even mean anything anymore, which is strange in these days of #MeToo and #BLM.

Education/Paideia – Paideia is the full enculturation of a student (a son or daughter) into the societal norms of his or her people, including its worldview, knowledge, skills. As Christians, we are instructed to teach our children to love our God with all their hearts and brains. Paideia is not only what we call education (stuff in school), it requires a biblical culture surrounding and supporting that process.

Paideia also means discipline and education is hard work – both for the educator and the "educatee." It probably was going to be much easier, but Adam ruined that for us (Gen 3:17-18) and we all begin with that nature of Adam. Developing a true "love for learning" is less about "making learning fun" and more about instructing us all to put our members to death (Col 3:5). Our remaining sin despises rigorous, hard work. A regenerate mind sees the world with wonder and seeks to know it all and to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

Education assumes a teacher, a person, and not just facts. We become like the one we are learning from (Luke 6:40). This is a powerful truth. Lifestyle and habits, presuppositions and preferences, are more caught than taught. A teacher has an enormous influence on his students, far more than either realizes in the moment. Teachers (including parents) must remember that "how" they approach teaching a subject is just as important as "what" they are teaching in the subject. Students (especially older students who are choosing their schools and teachers) must remember that the institution/teachers/curriculum and its presuppositions, these will be attempting to shape you and often quite subconsciously. Some statistics suggest that 70% of professing Christian kids will walk away from the faith during their college years – they were shaped.

Education/Discipleship – But we are all students and we are always students, because we are always disciples of Jesus. One of the dangers of thinking about the "school-age" years is that adults today are reading, studying, actively learning less and less. As parents, if you aren't interested in your Bible, in great literature, in stretching your mind to grow intellectually, and especially if you have a general malaise about being a disciple of Jesus, don't be surprised to find your children bored or angry about having to go to school, especially a Christian school or homeschool.

Honoring and Encouraging Those in the Fight - And so, a grand applause to all who are doing the work of providing a Christian education for their children and for all who are working to provide a culture of paideia for us to create and live and breathe a Christian culture for this and many more generations. As far as recovering, repairing, and rebuilding goes, we are still in our toddler years. There is so much more to do. But do not despise the day of small beginnings (Zech 4:10). God is building His temple, Christ is ruling over the nations, and the Spirit is at work among us. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, His death, burial and resurrection for your sins and His ascension and reign as Lord over all heaven and earth. Believe the promises of God for your covenant children. Pray for a revival and for a great movement of repentance in our nation. Put your hand to the plow in faith and let's go. Time for school.