

Education: Why Are We Doing What We're Doing? – Deut 6

Introduction – When we think of the time, money, and the multitude of sacrifices we are making to bring up our children in the “*training and admonition of the Lord*,” it behooves us to regularly remind ourselves why we are doing this. And if we are right, why are so many evangelical, Bible-believing Christians not doing this?

While most political conservatives (Christian and non-Christian) seem to be like-minded in their opposition to government run, universal health care, the majority of the same group (Christian and non-Christian) seems to continue to support government run, universal education. The claim in the past was to provide “free” government-sponsored (and taxpayer funded) education so that “no child left behind” would be a true claim. As the public education system crumbles, the cry is for more government funding, more government oversight and regulation, and more government training.

Education and Deuteronomy 6 – As a people were brought out of slavery and set in a land flowing with milk and honey, Yahweh warned and instructed these free, covenant people, that they must live according to their covenant and pass it on faithfully to the next generations. He was not instructing about Sunday worship only, or what you believe in your own private heart; He was instructing them to observe all His commands in the land all the days of their lives (vv1-3).

The Greatest Commandment (6:4-7a) – In this chapter we find what Jesus called the greatest commandment which, with the second, summed up all the law and prophets. Central to the giving of that commandment was the command to “*teach them* (all these words) *diligently to you children*.” Paul picks up on this in Eph 6:4 where the responsibility for the *paideia* of children falls squarely upon the shoulders of fathers. And neither passage has a truncated Sunday school curriculum in mind.

And These Words (6:6-9) – Education is the most religious thing we do with our children; education can never be religiously neutral. What Yahweh teaches is to affect our home life, our work life, from the beginning to the end of our day (v7). It is to deeply affect the way we see and understand everything we perceive and consider, and it is to come out our fingertips in the way we handle all we control and take dominion over (v8). This education is to train our children in familial and civil governance as well (v9). What we can see is that a biblical worldview is to inculcate every area of study.

Outcome Based Education (6:10-25) – The purpose of this *paideia* is so that we remember the lordship of Yahweh in our cities and marketplaces (vv10-12). It is to protect future generations (and ourselves) from forgetting to fear Yahweh in every government (vv13-15, also Deut 12:29ff). The purpose is to keep us diligently keeping all of His commandments and believing all His promises (vv16-19). And the curriculum should instruct our children in Yahweh’s lordship over everything and the goodness of the gospel as it works itself out in all of society (vv20-25). This is just what Jesus had in mind as well (Matt 28:18-20).

The Work of Recovering a Christian Education – Everyone involved in this work over the last 30 years or so realizes that we have come a long way and that we have a long way to go. Homeschooling, private Christian schools, and a classical based curriculum are not innovations of our time. They are a rediscovery, a reformation and renaissance. As one book is titled, we are “*Repairing the Ruins*.”

The Past – Americans have a disdain for old things and an obsession with the novel. Having done this for generations, we have produced generations (including ourselves) who do not even know how much they do not know. There was no Golden Age of education, but there have been dark ages, and we are certainly witnessing one. A return to a classical, Christian education is a return to times where a Deuteronomy 6 and Eph 6:4 mindset drove the theology, strategy, scope and curriculum of a people, of families who sought to train their children in the *paideia* of God. Part of that history has always included the study of old things, old words, and to then apply such wisdom into today’s situations.

Hard Work – To teachers, parents, and to students, it is important to make clear that this is a vocation, a calling, to a people, and to individuals in their different stations of life; it comes directly from our Triune God. Hearing this does not make it easier; this is hard work – but it does remind you that it is worth it.

Culture Wars – If we do not have a Bible-based view of education and its centrality to our entire curriculum, idols will fill the void. We cannot fight secular humanism when we and our children are indoctrinated in it. At the heart of our secular education and all secular-based social-services is a denial of the exhaustive Lordship of Jesus Christ, His assignment of particular authority to particular governments, a messianic view of civil government, and the fueling of envy upon the “have-nots” along with guilt upon the “haves”. A fundamental “right” to education logically leads to a fundamental “right” to health care and everything else from cradle to grave.

Encouraging Beginnings – But look around us. There is fruit from this labor – just beginning. We can’t hope to rebuild in one generation what we’ve destroyed over centuries. Our goal is to reclaim, reform, rebuild, and one day build upon, that which our Christian heritage has produced and provided. In God’s mercies, it will be used by Him to bring about a new reformation and revival, with workmen who can rightly divide the Word of God and who do not need to be ashamed to confront and unmask the idols of our age – in every avenue of life.