

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-28-10 AM
 “A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF EDUCATION”
 PSALM 127:3-5
 #7 in Series, “A Biblical Worldview”

Worldview – “The underlying belief system held by an individual that determines his / her attitudes and actions in life” [Glen Schultz, “Kingdom Education”, Page 35]. Thus far, after an overview of a Biblical worldview, we have examined a Biblical worldview of origins, the condition of man, work, the family, science, and today, education. Our emphasis today will be the education of children, but I want to make it clear that all of us are to be life-long learners. Just after I experienced a decade birthday recently, I sat down and wrote “10 Resolutions for Finishing Well”. One of the things I resolved to do until God calls me home is resolution #4, “I will never stop learning and be willing to learn from people half my age”. Education is a life long pursuit.

What a contrast this passage is to the prevailing view of children in our world today. Today, children are a burden, an accident, an intrusion into our self-absorbed lives. I remember a woman calling me several years ago (she never identified herself) and began her tearful conversation with, “Why is God doing this to me”? I finally got her calmed down enough to tell me that what God did to her was to allow her to become pregnant. She was married and her youngest child was starting to school and she was going to finally get to do some of the things that she wanted to do and now God had messed up her plans by giving her another child. That’s the view of the world, but this passage begins by saying that children are a “heritage” from the Lord. That is translated in the NASB “a gift from the Lord”. Two other key words describing a Biblical view of children in this passage are, “reward” (Verse 3) and “happy” (Verse 5). The Biblical view is that children are a gift and reward, and our response to having a child ought to be “happy”. In verse 4 children are described as being arrows in the hand of a warrior. In Old Testament times, warriors made their own arrows. They took great pains with them so they would fly straight and hit their target. I’m not an archer, but I have read that there are three qualities that an arrow must possess to be able to do its work when it is sent out by the warrior. First, the arrow must be straight. If it is not straight, it will not shoot straight. Our children are born crooked with the nature of Adam. The parents are one of the means God uses to bring them to Himself and to transform them into straight arrows through conversion. Second, an arrow must be balanced. Those feathers at the end of the arrow are not for decoration; they are placed there and trimmed just right to give the arrow balance. An unbalanced arrow wobbles and won’t hit the target. Our task as parents is to educate, train our children to be balanced. The greatest balance is found in **Luke 2:52 (NKJV)** “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” We went over this verse 2 weeks ago when we looked at a Biblical worldview of the family. We are to train and educate them in wisdom (seeing from God’s perspective), stature (care for their bodies which are the temple of the Holy Spirit after salvation), favor with God (how to walk with God, know God more deeply and intimately), and in favor with man (social skills and graces). Third, an arrow must be sharp. If a dull arrow hit’s its target, it only bruises it as it bounces off and falls to the ground. Our children are to be sharpened with a Biblical worldview and knowledge of the Scriptures and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Children are special to God and they should be to us also. One of our primary tasks is to educate them and prepare them to go out to reach areas were we cannot go and do things we cannot do and to perpetuate the faith from one generation to the next.

Christianity has always been distinguished by its teaching. It is ironic that many atheists and agnostics imply that Christians (especially committed Bible believing Christians) are ignorant and uneducated. In a front page article in the Washington Post a few years ago, a reporter said this of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell: “Their followers are largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command” [James Kennedy, “Lord of All”, Page 161]. The Post later apologized, but that does reflect the opinion of many educated non-Christians. Here is what is ironic about this false view of Christians being anti-education and anti-intellectual: Almost all formal Education has its roots in Christianity. Pastor John **Harvard** wasn’t anti-

education. The Puritan Elihu **Yale** wasn't anti-education. The Presbyterian founders of **Princeton** had a high (and Biblical) view of education. From the time of the Pilgrims and for the next 200 years, education was almost all Christian based. How successful was it? The second President of the United States, John Adams, said in the early 1800's that to find an illiterate man in New England was as rare as a comet. Today with the government taking over the majority of the education in America, we have an illiteracy rate that is close to the third world country of Zambia in South Africa. The education of the masses has its roots in Christianity. There was education before Christianity but it was generally for the elite, and not the masses. It was Christianity that said even the poor should have the opportunity for an education. Many of the world's languages were first set to writing by Christian missionaries in order that the masses could read the Bible.

While the words "education" or "educate" are not in most translations of the Bible, the words "teach", "instruct", "train" and "disciple" are words that we frequently find. When we study the life of Christ in the Gospels, we see Him constantly teaching the disciples and the masses. The result of teaching and instructing and discipling is to educate. It is hard to find a good definition of education. One I ran across that focuses on children and young people says that education is, "The process by which children and youth develop knowledge, skills, ability and character especially through formal instruction, training and study" [Glen Shultz, page 15]. Perhaps a simpler definition would be "The process of teaching and learning".

I. The Purpose of Education

For those with a man-centered worldview, the purpose of education would be to get a better paying job, to have intelligent conversation, to be thought better of by others, to reach a higher social standing or to broaden our horizons to be generally happier. What is the purpose of education from a God-centered worldview? The primary purpose of education is to glorify God (you knew that would be the answer). How, specifically do we do that? There are at least two ways God is glorified by education from a Biblical worldview:

A. God Is Glorified when Teaching the Gospel Leads to Conversion to Christ

It is God who saves a person, but the means He uses is someone teaching the lost person the gospel. When a person believes the gospel then he / she is delivered from the ultimate consequences of the fall. The old Adamic nature is crucified with Christ and the saved person has become a new creation in Christ. John Milton said in 1664, "The end [purpose] then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents" [Shultz, Page 33]. Education's primary purpose then is to teach the gospel that we might lead others to Christ that they may be transformed and glorify God with their lives.

B. God Is Glorified when We See Him in Every Subject of Study

There is no area of academic pursuit that is not tied to God and His character. When we study math, we need to see that God is orderly and consistent. Two plus two equals four every time. When we study science, we can see the wisdom and power of God. We see the order of God and the intricate plan of God manifested in the laws He put into effect in nature. The study of history, when seen from a Biblical worldview, gives us cause to worship Him. We see His sovereignty and providence in the events of history. We don't see a cyclical pattern in history; we see a linear pattern where everything is moving toward the final consummation when Christ returns to rule and reign forever. We see how rulers are allowed to be in power and rulers are put down. God's sovereignty and providential working shine through human history. In the study of art and music and literature we are drawn to worship him in His beauty (Psalm 27:4).

God is glorified when we teach the gospel and the person who hears and believes is transformed into a new creation, and God is glorified when we see Him in every area of study.

II. The History of Education

I am going to limit this short journey through the history of education to a brief summary of the last 2000 years. From the fourth century when Christianity was generally accepted in the Roman Empire and

no longer widely persecuted, through the tenth century, schools were built alongside church buildings. The curriculum of these schools that we would call elementary and secondary schools generally had two parts: there was the trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy). This is called the classical education. It was also Christians that started some of the first universities in the Middle Ages. Many of these early educators had a passion to see the Bible move beyond just religious and moral instruction and see it applied to every realm.

The idea of education for everybody grew directly out of the Protestant Reformation. The reformers believed that the only way the reformation would hold was if people could read the Bible for themselves. Comenius is often called “the Father of modern education” and he was a reformer. Martin Luther and John Calvin contributed heavily to widespread education for the masses where their views of the Scripture held sway. John Calvin believed and taught that all truth is God’s truth and God revealed His truth in two books: The book of Scripture and the book of nature. Because Calvin believed in the depravity of man, he taught that all education must be grounded in the Scriptures since information in itself wouldn’t necessarily make people better. In 1941, Germany was the most literate nation in the world. They had the highest standard of education in the world and yet it did not prevent the holocaust. History records that the nations most influenced by the Reformers were the best educated nations with the highest literacy rates.

Let’s move now to education in America. Prior to the Revolutionary war, all of the universities in the colonies were Christian with the exception of the University of Virginia and the great evangelist George Whitefield was instrumental in starting that school. From 1636 when Harvard University was founded to 1769 when Dartmouth was founded to train missionaries to the Indians, every discipline in the universities was taught with a Biblical, God-centered worldview. For example, let’s look at Harvard and Yale. Both schools were formed to train ministers so the people could have educated preachers. The original motto for Harvard was “Truth for Christ and the Church”. Sometime in the 20th Century the motto was shortened to just “Truth”. Now the prominent teaching there is that truth is whatever you want it to be. The original mission of Harvard was derived from **John 17:3**. It said, “Everyone shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life”. In Bradford Connecticut, a group of Congregational Ministers got together and each one donated some books that a college might be started. They named it in honor of the Puritan Elihu Yale. It was started primarily to provide an educated clergy. An early President of Princeton, Dr. John Witherspoon said, “Cursed be all learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ.” It would be an understatement to say that the Ivy League schools have departed from their initial purpose.

The Puritans first came to America in 1630. Before they had been in the country for 20 years they mandated that the children among them be educated. The primary reason was that they could read the Scriptures for themselves, but they received a very good education in all core subjects. The curriculum the Puritans used to educate their children was unique. “The New England Primer” utilized Bible facts to teach the alphabet. Here is an example just using the first six letters of the alphabet:

A = In Adam’s fall, we sinned all
 B = Heaven to find, the Bible mind
 C = Christ crucified, for sinners died
 D = The Deluge drowned the earth around
 E = Elijah hid by ravens fed
 F = The judgment made Felix afraid.

The close link between the Bible and education continued beyond the Colonial period. Perhaps you have heard of the McGuffey’s Readers. McGuffey was a Presbyterian minister. For many decades, these readers formed the backbone of grammar school education for this country. The earlier editions of the readers were clearly Christian. Dr. John Westerhoff III, a professor at Duke University said, “Basically, the McGuffey Readers directed persons to live for salvation – for eternal life with God in another world – a life goal connected closely to righteousness” [Quoted in James Kennedy, “What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?” Page 50].

III. The State of Public Education

To adequately see a Biblical worldview of education, we must look at the public schools and compare them to a Biblical worldview. Let me make a disclaimer. I am not nor have I ever been for the church abandoning the public schools. Doing that would remove the salt and light and leave the public schools to total decay and total darkness. I affirm the ministries and work of Christian public school teachers and administrators. You have my admiration and prayers. Having said that, I believe that in the public school system, we are reaping what we have sown as a nation. Most of us have seen or at least heard the stark contrast of just 2 generations ago and today's generation by looking at the list of major problem in public school in the 1940' and 1950's and then today. In the 1940's and 50's it was: Talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noises, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress code infractions, and littering. Today the list reads like this: Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault. How did we get to this place? To answer that, we have to plug back into history. In 1837 modern public education was born under the influence of Horace Mann. Mann was president of the Massachusetts Legislature and chairman of the new state board of education of America's first public school system. Mann was a Unitarian who denied the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. Mann led in the secularization of American public education. One of his goals was to deliver the schools from the Christian religion. What Mann planted John Dewey caused to sprout and grow so that Mann's goals could come to fruition. Dewey was a Professor at New York's Columbia University. His ideas began to infiltrate and strongly influence all public education in America. Dewey was a humanist and was not a Christian. He felt that Christianity was the chief problem that needed to be solved by our public educational system. Nancy Pearcey summarized Dewey's education philosophy: "He recast intellectual inquiry as a form of mental evolution, and said it should proceed on the same pattern as biological evolution: by posing problems and then letting students construct their own answers based on what works best – a kind of mental adaptation to the environment. Teachers are not instructors but 'facilitators' guiding students as they try out various pragmatic strategies to discover what works for them. Of course, this is inherently relativistic: After all, what works for me may not work for you. (In fact, it might not even work for *me* all the time.) Thus pragmatism inevitably leads to a pluralism of beliefs, all of them transient and none of them eternally or universally true" [Nancy Pearcey, "Total Truth", Page 239]. With that abbreviated glance back into history, you can see how we came to a relativistic view of truth in our educational system. The result is that there is no ethical framework on which to hang information. Those educated under Dewey's system have no basis on which to make decisions except their own ideas, desires, and goals. Dr. Tony Evans nails the heart of the problem in public education today. He said, "...giving schoolchildren knowledge without a fixed standard of truth is dangerous. Whenever you get information without a standard, then *you* determine how to use that information. That's how you come up with a Dr. Kevorkian. The reason we are spending more money than ever on education and getting fewer positive results in terms of children's lives is not because the information is bad or the teachers are bad. It is because the schools are caught in a worldview crisis" [Tony Evans, "What a Way to Live", Page 473].

IV. The Responsibility for Education

In the Scriptures, the government is not given the responsibility to provide education. It is not expressly forbidden that governments provide an education; it just is not mandated. The mandate to educate is given to the parents and to the church. Let's look at the church first. One of the qualifications of an Elder is in **1 Timothy 3:2b (NKJV)** "...able to teach". Every command to make disciples is a command to teach. Teaching is one of the main functions of the church. When it comes to children however, the Bible places the ultimate responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the parents and actually the Father in the home is ultimately responsible. **Deuteronomy 4:9 (NKJV)** "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren". **Deuteronomy 6:7 (NKJV)** "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." We are talking here about more than family

devotions (though they are important). If you choose to put your children in the public school system, you must give them that Biblical framework of truth that they can weave into it the information that they are taught. While parents are responsible, they don't have to do it all. They can utilize the church – children's ministry and the youth ministry and even the college ministry. The ministries of the church are not meant to take over the responsibility of teaching your children; they come along side the parents to equip them and aid them in fulfilling their responsibility. Many parents in our church have chosen to homeschool their children. That's wonderful, but it takes a deep commitment and if half done, great harm can be done. We certainly believe in Christian education since we have the First Baptist Academy whose mission statement includes teaching children a Biblical worldview. The goal of the teaching in the Academy is to integrate the Bible into every subject that is taught. The decision of what type of education (home schooling, Christian schooling, or public schooling) is up to each parent, but whatever route you prayerfully choose, do not lose sight of the fact that you are ultimately responsible for their education. Most of that education will be in the flow of life and not in formal settings. As Deuteronomy 6:7 says, it will be as you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.

CONCLUSION

Do you remember the slogan of the Negro College Fund? It was "The mind is a terrible thing to waste". When God and His word are left out of an education, the mind has been wasted. Don't waste your mind. (3453)