

# Theological Equipping Class

## *Christians and Education*

November 29, 2020

What is education?

Schooling vs. learning

Learning vs. education

What's the goal of education?

Metaphysics: what is real?

Epistemology: what is true and how do we know?

Axiology: what is good/valuable?

Modern vs. classical models of education

Why is this important? Unless you know the end, you don't know the means.

What is the goal from a Christian perspective?

What does the Bible say about education?

- *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)*
- *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds... (Ephesians 4:23)*
- *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)*
- *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)*
- *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)*
- *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)*

- *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:5)*
- *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... (Hosea 4:6)*
- *Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge. (Proverbs 23:12)*
- *An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. (Proverbs 18:15)*

## Education in Christianity

### Education in Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures

1. Value of education
2. Family and society
3. Virtue: formation rather than information

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)*

### Christian Education

- To be ordained a bishop in Egypt in the 4<sup>th</sup> century you had to have all the Psalms, two of the major prophets (like Isaiah & Jeremiah), all of the gospels, & all of Paul's letters completely memorized.
- Jerome translated the entire Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin.
- Pope Gregory the Great: "No one claims to be able to teach an art until first having learned it through careful study. With what incredible boldness then do the unlearned and unskillful stand ready to assume pastoral authority, forgetting that the care of souls is the art of arts! For it is clear that the ills of the mind are more hidden than the ills of the bowels. And yet quite often those who have no knowledge whatever of spiritual principles dare to declare themselves physicians of the heart, while those who do not know of the use of drugs would never dare to call themselves physicians of the flesh!"
- Middle Ages/Medieval Period

- What about the Reformation?
  - Luther had a doctorate in theology. He translated the entire New Testament from Greek into German in just 10 weeks by himself.
  - John Calvin studied at multiple universities, wrote one of the most popular Protestant systematic theology textbooks of all time (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*), first published a commentary on Cicero that he wrote in Latin at the age of just 23.
  - Ulrich Zwingli, in addition to having a strong formal education, had all of Paul's letters memorized in Greek.
  
- What about the Post-Reformation?
  - Jonathan Edwards, who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, went to Yale at 14, graduated with his bachelor's at 17 and had his master's before he was 20. He then went on to become the president of Princeton. He sometimes studied 14 hours a day and is considered to be the greatest mind to ever come out of North America.
  - Charles Spurgeon, was a rare exception of a historical pastor without formal education, but don't let that fool you since he did have a library of over 20,000 volumes, tutored Greek at Cambridge, and was reading the puritans by the age of 12.
  - Harvard, Yale, & Princeton were all started as Christian universities to train ministers. You had to already know Greek, Hebrew, & Latin before you could even apply.
  
- Does this seem to describe pastors and churches and the average evangelical today?
  - "It has always been a sin not to love the Lord our God with our minds as well as our hearts and souls...We have excused this with a degree of pietism and pretending that this is something other than what it is – that is, sin...Evangelicals need to repent of their refusal to think Christianly and to develop the mind of Christ." (Os Guinness)

How should Christians pursue education of their kids?

Four Qualifiers:

1. The danger of opinions

2. The government doesn't have the right to tell parents how to educate their children.

3. Parents Bear Responsibility to Teach their Kids

- *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, (Proverbs 1:8)*
- *Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. (Proverbs 4:1-2)*
- *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*
- *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4)*

4. Parents can use others to supplement the education of their kids, but not as a substitute to their own responsibility.

What should Christians think about homeschooling, private schools and public schools?

### Public School

Pros:

- Its generally not as expensive as private or homeschool since its already covered by taxes.
- It teaches kids to be around many different worldviews.
- It helps with socialization by putting kids in difficult social situations where they learn to adapt.
- It allows parents to have more time to take care of other responsibilities.
- It offers a higher level of competition in sports.
- As children get older, they have opportunities for evangelism.

Cons:

- The state determines what is taught.
- There is always the danger of being indoctrinated with unchristian views about particular topics and an unchristian worldview in general.
- Depending on the school district, the quality of education can be poor.
- Its physically more dangerous with bullying, shootings, drug use, sexual assault, etc.
- It puts kids around various bad influences.
- Some time is wasted (the actual *learning* time is not as long as the school day).

- Discipline of any sort is more and more taboo today.

### Private School

#### Pros:

- The teachers often have higher credentials.
- The work is often more rigorous.
- It helps with socialization by putting kids in difficult social situations where they learn to adapt.
- It allows parents more time to take care of other responsibilities.
- They teach topics many public schools do not (theology, philosophy, ethics, etc.).
- It can help students get into better colleges.

#### Cons:

- Its expensive and not covered by your taxes.
- Christian private schools can be very hypocritical (it can cause kids to become numb to real Christianity and often promotes legalism or something else instead of truth).
- Private schools can indoctrinate students just as much as public schools. Related to that, false doctrine can be taught as if it were true doctrine.
- Children don't interact with as many non-Christians, at least not admittedly.
- They sometimes don't offer as many extra-curricular activities as public schools.
- Sometimes the competition in sports is not as good as public school.

### Homeschool

#### Pros:

- Parents have direct control over what their kids learn.
- Many follow a classical rather than a modern model of education.
- The school day can be shorter.
- Education can incorporate the natural rhythms of family life (vacation, field trips, etc.).
- Kids are not as often directly influenced by those with bad character.
- Co-ops help develop social skills and allow parents to specialize in teaching areas.
- Kids are more used to interacting with people of varying ages (including adults).
- Students can work ahead if they're succeeding and slow down if they're struggling.

#### Cons:

- Its much more work for the parents.
- Its not free.
- Your education is only as good as the parents who teach it.
- It may not have the level of extra-curricular activities of a public school.
- Some forms of homeschooling lack social skills development.
- Colleges and government institutions vary on what they think of homeschoolers.
- Parents are limited in fulfilling other obligations while homeschooling.
- The competition in sports is often not as good as public school.
- Can encourage a monastic view of morality in which the subtle implication is that rather than engage the world, we abandon the world.

Are all Options Equally Wise?

What are the dangers?