

The Necessity of Christian Education in 2021 – *Deut 6:3-9, Eph 6:1-4*

Introduction – To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be a learner, a student. And so we are all students. We are also, corporately as the church, teachers commissioned to disciple the nations, teaching them to obey everything the Lord has commanded. To be Christian is to be in the world of education and to be Christian is to submit all study under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is needed on the part of Christian families for not obeying the texts just read. Repentance is needed, deep repentance, on the part of the Christian church, for not preaching these truths to their families. A thoroughly Christian education is not an option for Christian parents. It is commanded by your heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Overview of the Texts – As God gave His Law-Word to His covenant people, He told them that careful study and practice from that Word was required and promised abundant societal blessing from doing so (Deut 6:3). The center of it all is loyal love to the One True God (v4), with all parts of oneself (v5). The Word and this love was to be kept honestly and sincerely in one's heart (v6). It was to be diligently explained and applied to and with their children throughout the whole day, inculcated into every part of life (v7). It was to be the guard and guide over one's actions and the filter of all observation and evaluation (v8). It was to govern one's family life as well as the society's (v9).

Children are to obey their parents, which is one of the Ten Commandments (Eph 6:1-2). And we see that the promise extends to all covenant children and to the whole earth (v3). Parents, and fathers in particular as the head of the household, must be very careful in that role not to provoke their children to wrath, but rather to bring them up in the *paideia* (whole-worldview discipleship) and *nouthesia* (counsel of God's Word for every situation) of the Lord (v4).

A Stern Warning (Matt 18:6) – Christian families are guilty of abdicating their responsibility to give their children a Christian education. We, as a nation, have been guilty of experimenting upon our children through our government education system. Christians have bought the lie of “neutrality” in education and, in the process, truncated what we mean by “Christian” in education. The Lord of the universe has declared a great woe upon us. And He has done so whether we acknowledge Him or not.

Rival Religions (Rom 1:18-31) – When it comes to acknowledging truth and where that truth comes from, you have one of two options. Either you openly acknowledge and thank God for all things, declaring His glory in everything – or you suppress the truth in darkness, pretend to be wise by making man the center of everything, and set up your own system of “right and wrong”. This is the great sin of the Enlightenment.

The Impossibility of Neutrality in Education (Prov 1:7, Matt 12:30) – All knowledge must be received and evaluated in a mind filled with presuppositions. Those fundamental assumptions about the nature of truth, goodness, and beauty are either submissive to the declared Word of God, or they are in rebellion to them. Education is therefore, one of the most religious things we do.

The Wrong Government (Deut 6:7, Eph 6:4) – There is no biblical warrant for the civil government to be involved in the education of children. The responsibility for that rests squarely on the shoulders of fathers. Abdication of this responsibility has brought us great grief and confusion. Our confusion in this has led to confusion regarding the biblical doctrine of sphere sovereignty. Briefly, God has ordained three governments and defined their responsibilities (limiting the breadth of what they may govern and limiting their power by claiming full Lordship over these governments). These three governments are the government of the church (Eph 2:20), the civil government (Rom 13:1-5), and the government of the family (Matt 19:4-6). The family is the ministry of health, education, and welfare. The church is the ministry of Word and sacrament. The state is the ministry of “the sword,” protecting the rights of citizens, punishing wrongdoers, and keeping the peace. Throughout church history, each of these governments has been guilty of overreach. Today, we live in a day of civil government overreach. Accusing fingers for this problem are pointed at abdicating fathers, theologically weak and corrupted churches, and grasping political tyrants. However, Abraham Kuyper called it right when he said, “*In any successful attack on freedom the state can only be an accomplice. The chief culprit is the citizen who forgets his duty, wastes away his strength in the sleep of sin and sensual pleasure, and so loses the power of his own initiative.*” As one prophet of our own said, “*there is no such thing as a free lunch.*”

As I see it, one of the subjects we are not versed in, that we need a crash course in, and that we must saturate our children in, is a Christian view of civics, including the importance of sphere sovereignty, the separation of powers, the necessity of resistance to tyrants, the difference between “citizens” and “subjects,” the doctrine of the lesser magistrate, and the protestant work ethic. But that would necessitate a thoroughly Christian education (*see suggested reading list*).

The Work Ahead of Us – Do we see signs of God’s mercy upon His church today (Mal 4:5-6)? The opportunities and availability of providing a Christ-centered education for your children are exploding all around you, in home-schools, co-ops, tutorial services, private Christian schools, curriculums, training guides, and a couple generations of parents, far more than simply a remnant now, who have been doing the work.

Will Be Hard (Gal 6:9) – Ever since the Garden, our work has been much harder than God originally ordered. And we are now trying to recover systems of learning and thinking that we have tried to destroy for generations. Great potential threats to freedom of education loom on the horizon of our culture. We need to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Children, as you hear this message, you need to grow in your gratefulness and appreciation of the sacrifice your parents and this community are making to obey the Lord. Obey your parents in the Lord in glad-hearted response. Immense blessings await those who will.

Will Require Constant Encouragement (Gal 6:2, 10) – We are a community of believers and around you here are a multitude of great needs. While the responsibility for the education of the children rests in the hands of the fathers, we have a responsibility as brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage, comfort, pray for, support, admonish – to love one another.

Must Be Done in Faith (Deut 7:6, Psalm 103:17-18) – Except for the grace of God, all of our efforts to instruct our children will be in vain (Ps 127). But He has given us promises for our children and we must stand on those promises. If we do the work without faith, absent of believing in God’s promises, we will be guilty of another form of man-centered arrogance. If we do the work in faith, we will be the recipients of abounding grace in the work and in the harvest.

Dave Hatcher – Sept 3, 2021 (much of this outline is from a sermon in Sept, 2000)

Suggested Reading List –

The Bible

Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos – Junius Brutus

Slaying Leviathan – Glen Sunshine

The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates – Matthew Trewhella

Politics of Guilt and Pity – RJ Rushdoony

Excused Absence – Douglas Wilson