

# Fashioning Arrows: Christian Education 2022 – *Psalm 127:3-5, Eph 6:4*

**Introduction** – We are a congregation that has been given a wonderful gift, a denomination with a Spirit-inspired distinctive. We have set ourselves to understand and obey these verses – and to put them into practice through a variety of methods. We believe that the responsibility to educate children falls upon fathers and not the civil government. We also believe that education is preparation for cultural and spiritual warfare in and over the world of unbelief. Joseph Stalin understood this: “*Education is a weapon, whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed.*” Stalin knew that in order to build a country according to his worldview (atheistic communism), the state had to control how the minds of the next generation were programmed. So does our statist education system today. Our goal, therefore, is not simply to instill a Christian worldview that defends the faith. God intends the church to break down strongholds and take captive every thought, against which even the gates of Hades cannot prevail. God has called us to fashion faithful generations of disciples to do that in every aspect of human civilization.

**Biblical Warfare** – We must understand the metaphorical context of the Psalm. We must understand the antithesis of two seeds, two sides, and the war in which we live. Why is there a martial theme in the goal of childrearing?

**The Antithesis** (Gen 3:15) – We educate our children because there has been a war since the Fall. We are to train our children for the fundamental battle and we are to train them to win. Every nation, every vocation, every station in life, is to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ (Psalm 67, Phil 2:9-11). The decisive blow in this war was Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection where He defeated the devil; His victory also is the ground of our justification and sanctification.

**God the Warrior** – “*The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name*” (Ex 15:3). He is “*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle*” (Psalm 24:8). Disciples of this Warrior regularly are described with martial language (Eph 6:10, 2 Cor 10:3-4, 1 Tim 1:18, 6:12, 2 Tim 2:3).

**The Enemy** – Our enemy is the devil, along with the world and the flesh. These are intertwined in one sense (for instance 1 John 2:16), but it is helpful to distinguish as well – the battle is both internal and external. Psalm 127:5 is not describing a healthy dialogue with the enemies in the gate (in fact it could be translated “*shall destroy the enemies in the gate*”).

**The Impossibility of Neutrality in Education** (Prov 1:7, Matt 12:30) – Understood as war, we see that it is impossible to train up our children in enemy territory. But for many generations, American Christians have bought into the lie of religious neutrality in education. We have done so because we have not been willing to see the antithesis before us, nor the promised victory in the battle. 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 it. It has been said that education is one of the most religious things we do. It should also be said that it is one of the most martial things that we do.

**Fashioning Arrows at Trinity Church in 2022** – Ever grateful for the commitment and hard work of this assembly to obey the Lord in this arena, I do not need to “sing to the choir.” Nevertheless, where do we need to be reminded and encouraged, and where might we need to see that we do not veer off the course?

**Education by Faith** – It is not enough to send your children to a Christian school, nor to homeschool. If it is to be a truly Christian education, it must be done by faith. Not faith in yourself, not faith in a curriculum or method. Faith in the promises of God. Read Psalm 127 and hear Eph 6 in light of the promises God has given us for our children (Ps 102:25-28, 103:15-18, Ezek 37:24-26, Luke 1:48-50, Acts 2:37-39). The heart of covenant-keeping is promise-believing, and this means Psalm 127:1-2 applies as well.

**Education is Worship** – Education is not our savior; Christ is our Savior. However, if education is an outflow of our faith, then this work is the service of worshipping God. We are to offer up our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1) and we are to do so by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2). For students (disciples/learners), this means that our studies are to be done “*unto the Lord.*” For parents, churches, schools, teachers, it means that all our work in this is holy obedience rendered to our Lord for His kingdom. You are unsung heroes doing the most important job in the world.

**Playing the Long Game** – Gal 6:9 admonishes us not to grow weary in doing good. Children must give themselves to the long haul of education, seeing it as their vocation. It also reminds us that we are still in the beginning stages of repairing the ruins of a generations-long destruction of education and the mind/soul of western man. Be patient with one another. Do not be the kind of people Bonhoeffer called visionary dreamers, never satisfied with anything in the real world because it doesn’t live up to their ideal. Regarding community, he wrote, “*Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community, even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial.*” This is so true in the community of Christian education, educators, and their “friendly” critics. God is perfect, but not a perfectionist. He is easily pleased and never satisfied.

**Other Friendly Fire: Homeschoolers vs Private Christian Schools** – You are passionate about your decision to homeschool or start/join a Christian Co-op or start/join a Christian Day School. Your time and money prove it. You have your reasons for choosing one method over another and you believe your reasons are right. Well and good. But do not forget the difference between principles and methods. Those who chose other methods you didn't choose are not your enemies, they are another battalion on your side. They are the Navy, you are the Army. In the fellowship of the church, in the friendships established with families and among children, these are not places to fight one another. They are places to cultivate deep and lasting loyalty. These are your fellow warriors. The Lord hates schisms and cliques (1 Cor 1:11-12). The war is out there. Parents and Children – this will not come naturally; you will have to initiate and work towards such fellowship.

**Expect a Battle** – Part of the reason for strengthening our fellowship and community here is that we should expect a growing battle from out there. Do not grow complacent. The devil and the world hate what we are doing (Eph 6:10-13). We remain a seemingly insignificant minority to most of them today, but that is changing. In our current woke-culture, we should expect to be tested on multiple levels by the establishment to conform to their standards, and we should prayerfully prepare to cover, care, and support one another in the days and years ahead.

**The Reformation Before Us** – In warfare, as in all hard work, it is important to rally the troops with a well-defined objective. Here it is. God has given promises to us and to our children, to a thousand generations. Under those promises, we have been told to go and disciple the nations. But we have been told to do so under the victorious authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20). As we obey our call to disciple our children, we are declaring war upon the gods of false religions and their followers. But as you roll up your sleeves, children and parents, teachers and this entire congregation, for another year of school, you must see with eyes of faith all that the Lord is giving back to us. It is truly the knowledge of the Lord (Is 65:23), and the glory of this knowledge will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Is 11:9).

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*Dave Hatcher – September 4, 2022*