

Arming the Next Generation **Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 2 Corinthians 10:4-6**

Introduction

Since the day our first parents broke God's command and plunged mankind into sin and spiritual death, the world has been at war. God told the serpent that there would be enmity between his seed and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), and the line between these two sides divides the whole human race. There is a constant need to train the next generation of Christians up to know this war, to teach them Who their Captain is, and to equip them. Joseph Stalin understood the need for education as he sought to train generations to take the side of the dragon under God-hating communism: "Education is a weapon, whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed." He was not wrong. The purpose of Christian education is to train up God's children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), equipping them to take their place in the gate (Ps. 127:3-5), all the while submitting everything to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17).

Education for Taking the Land

In Deuteronomy 6, the Lord clearly commands His people to train their children according to His ways (echoed in places like Eph. 6:4), establishing the authority of education firmly on the shoulders of parents. Having reminded the people of the Ten Commandments, Moses calls on the people and their children and their grandchildren to keep all His words so that it may go well with them as they go to take the promised land (Deut. 6:1-3). These words are summed up in the command to love their God, the one Lord, with everything they are and have (6:4-5, cf. Matt. 22:37-40). These words are to be in their hearts, taught and discussed with their children in all their doings, ever before their eyes and hands, hovering over all their comings and goings (6:6-9). This total commitment to and integration of God's Word in everything they do and think is part of taking the pagan promised land and transforming it into the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 28:18-20).

Every Thought Captive

Speaking of our warfare, Paul reminds Christians that this war is not fought with physical weapons. Our weapons are mighty in God, though, devastating the strongholds of false gods and ideologies (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Along with that, every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (10:5). To bring down the strongholds of unbelief and to bring unbelieving thought into Christ's captivity, this must be done in the hearts and minds of Christians first. Christians must submit all of their own thoughts to the obedience of King Jesus. It is not enough to learn skills and arguments and histories. They must be learned on the foundation of His lordship because He is Lord of it all (Col. 1:15-17). If this is not expressly taught and—as far as it is up to us—accomplished in our education, then our education fails. If our children are not trained to take every thought captive, then there is a good chance that the excellent education we seek to give them is only equipping soldiers for the other side. We must train them in the nurture and admonition *of the Lord*.

Six Internal Enemies of Christian Education

Idealism – Be wary of marring the good by fixating on the best. In education, as in all things, there will be differences, shortcomings, and limitations. There will be some who are

visionary and can see further and others who are just barely keeping up. Bonhoeffer said: "Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than the Christian community itself become destroyers of that community, even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial." The same is true for whatever form your education takes. This applies also to deciding between different methods of education. While we agree on the principle of Christian education provided by parents, we must be charitable towards brothers and sisters who apply the principle differently. We are on the same team.

Complacency – At the same time, we must strive for excellence. In education, as in any of our Christian endeavors, remember: "*semper reformanda*." We must not grow weary in doing good, and we must press further up and further in. When Christians are complacent, the enemy advances. This is not progress or change for the sake of mere progress. We are seeking to constantly be more conformed to the image of Christ.

Arrogance and Forgetfulness – Related to this, God warns Israel not to forget all that God had done for them as they settle in the land (Deut. 8:11-20). This forgetfulness and ingratitude would lead to their arrogance ("My power and the might of my hand..."). This is particularly appropriate for us as we are roughly in the second generation of the revival of Christian education in our community.

Idolatry – Christian education is necessary, but we must not think that if we just get it right or do it hard enough or long enough, our kids will be fine. This is nothing less than idolatry. If education is not done by faith in Christ, trusting in God and His promises, then it is futile. Our education must point to the Savior; education itself is not and never can be the savior.

Compromise – In Judges 17, not long after the conquest of Canaan, Micah made some silver idols and began his own cult, taking a travelling Levite to be his priest. Because of this, Micah thought that the blessings of Yahweh will come upon him (17:13). This is given as one of the tales at the end of Judges demonstrating the failure of the Levites to instruct the people of Israel and of the generation before to faithfully train their children to love the Lord their God (2:10). Micah's failure was thinking he could adopt the pagan ways and yet be pleasing to God by sprinkling some Levitical holiness over it.

Envy – Pilate recognized that the Jews had delivered Jesus over to be killed, not because of doctrinal issues, but because of envy (Matt. 27:18). Envy of influence, success or popularity of methods, natural abilities, opportunities—really of just about anything—will destroy the fellowship of Christians seeking together to train up their children.

Conclusion

You and your children are in a war. You have been commissioned by your King to go and take the land, and this requires the training up of the next generation and the next and the next. The stakes are very high. But do not forget: the reason Jesus commands His people to go and take over the world is because it has already been given to Him. In other words, the ground on which we stand as we do battle is Christ's victory. He has already won, and so His victory must be the foundation of our education (1 Cor. 15:57-58).