

FBC POWELL, 8-20-17 AM NOTES
"A Biblical Worldview of Education"
Various Scriptures
10 in Series, "A Biblical Worldview"

Worldview—"The underlying belief system held by an individual that determines his or her attitudes and actions in life."

—Glen Schultz

"Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people." —The Baptist Faith and Message, Article 12

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Acts 16:31a "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."

Proverbs 10:27 (NIV) "The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short."

"A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience."

—Adrian Rogers

"So, these proverbs are gems of wisdom that are principles meant to be God's guide to living. Remember they are just that—principles and guides. They are not meant to overrule any special plan that God may have for His saints. They are not meant to be iron-clad contracts, but principles and guides."

—Adrian Rogers

I. The Purpose of Education

Romans 1:20a "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen..."

A. The Biblical Purpose of Education Is to Make Disciples

"The end [purpose] then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents."

—John Milton

B. The Biblical Purpose of Education Is to See God's Hand and Plan in Every Subject

II. The History of Education

John 17:3 “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

“Everyone shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life.”

—The Original Mission of Harvard University

“Cursed be all learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ.”

—John Witherspoon, an early President of Princeton

“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

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III. The Current Crisis in Education

“He [John Dewey] 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, in Dewey’s view, 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...Thus pragmatism inevitably leads to a pluralism of beliefs, all of them transient and none of them eternally or universally true.”

—Nancy Pearcey

IV. The Responsibility for Education

1 Timothy 3:2b “...able to teach.”

Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV) “Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

Deuteronomy 6:7 (ESV) “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.”

Sermon 10: A Biblical Worldview of Education

Various Scriptures

Worldview – “The underlying belief system held by an individual that determines his or her attitudes and actions in life.” [Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education*, page 35]

In reality, everyone has a worldview. It may have never been thought through. It may even be contradictory, but it is there even if it cannot be articulated. As a believer, you have a desire to have a biblical worldview in every area. I cannot “guilt” that desire; it will be there if you have truly become a new creation in Christ.

Thus far in this series, we have examined a biblical worldview of origins, authority, man, family, history, worship, suffering, justice, and today, a biblical worldview of education. Our denomination’s doctrinal statement is called, *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Article 12, which deals with education says:

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

While I will have a few things to share about education in general, most of this message is focused on the education of our children. The most familiar verse concerning educating children is Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” The biggest mistake people make when it comes to interpreting the biblical book of Proverbs is to treat a proverb like a promise. A biblical proverb is not a promise; it is a proverb. A promise involves an obligation: “*If A is done, then B will follow.*” Here is an example of a promise: Acts 16:31a: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” A Proverb on the other hand has to do with a general observable principle of life that is usually true. A Proverb says: “If A is true, B will *generally* follow.”

Let me give you an example of how a proverb is not a promise. Proverbs 10:27 (NIV): “The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.” Is this a promise that if you fear the Lord, you will live a long life and if you are wicked, you will die young? I know some really mean old people who seem to be in great health. What about godly people like David Brainerd, Jim Elliot, and Robert Murray M’Cheyne who were some of the godliest men who ever lived and all three died before they were thirty. What about John and Betty Stam, a godly young missionary couple in China who were martyred by the communists in 1934? At their death, John was twenty-seven and Betty was twenty-eight. So, is Proverbs 10:27 in error? No, because this verse is not a promise; it is a proverb and it is generally true. People who lead lives in bondage to sins like drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity usually die younger than people who fear God and walk in obedience to His precepts. However, in God’s sovereign plan and for the sake of the gospel, some godly people die young and on the other hand, God in His sovereign mercy grants great sinners a long life inviting them in the general call to repent and be saved from their sin. When making decisions for living daily life, it is wise to fear the Lord and when you do you will not die young as the result of a sinful lifestyle. Do you see the difference between a promise and a proverb?

My favorite definition of a proverb is from Adrian Rogers: “A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience.” The inspired Proverbs of Scripture are nuggets of wisdom that God has given to us through divine inspiration to enable us to live wisely. Adrian Rogers gives a good summary: “So, these proverbs are gems of wisdom that are principles meant to be God’s guide to living. Remember they are just that – principles and guides. They are not meant to overrule any special plan that God may have for His saints. They are not meant to be iron-clad contracts but principles and guides.” [Adrian Rogers, *God’s Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom*, page iv]

Certainly Proverbs 22:6 speaks of the importance of properly educating our children. The Hebrew word translated “Train up” is interesting. The original root word is the term for palate, the roof of the mouth, or the gums. In Solomon’s day, it described how soon after delivering a baby the midwife would dip her finger in juice or crushed dates and rub the roof of the newborn’s mouth and the gums to get the child ready to nurse. The word came to mean, “developing a thirst.” One of the greatest things a parent can do is to give their child a desire, a thirst to learn.

The phrase, “in the way he should go” literally means, “in keeping with or in accordance with his way.” Every child has different *bends*, different gifting, different ways they learn best, different talents, and different ways they are motivated. There are no “cookie cutter” children! Parents need to understand that as they teach their children; teachers need to know that. Allow me to go back to Proverbs 22:6. That phrase, “old” literally means “hair on his chin.” Using a boy as an example, this verse says that as a child who has been brought up according to his bends, according to his unique way of learning comes into maturity, they are not likely to turn away from their training. I share all of this as an example of the fact that the Bible has much to say about education, especially the education of children.

I. The Purpose of Education

From a biblical worldview, what is 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 one’s horizons to be generally happier. What is the purpose of education from a biblical worldview? The primary purpose of education is to glorify God (you knew that would be the answer). There are at least two ways God is glorified by education from a Biblical worldview.

A. The Biblical Purpose of Education Is to Make Disciples

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 or 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. The Biblical Purpose of Education Is to See God’s Hand and Plan in Every Subject

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. They are often called, “the laws of nature,” but in reality, even the scientific laws, the laws that control nature, are the laws God put there in creation. 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 His hand in every area of study.

II. The History of Education

I am going to focus on history since Christianity. From the fourth century, when under Constantine 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). While the trivium deals with the approach to learning, the quadrivium dealt with the major subjects taught. Today, some varieties of this are called 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. History records that the nations most influenced by the Protestant Reformation were the best educated nations with the highest literacy rates.

Let’s move now to the history of education in America. Prior to the Revolutionary war, all 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 so that a college 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 twenty years they mandated that the children among them be educated. The primary reason was so 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 who 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 Current Crisis in Education

Allow me to give a disclaimer. I am not, nor have I ever been, for the church abandoning the public schools. Doing that would remove the Scripture’s influence and leave the public schools destined to total spiritual 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 three generations ago and today’s generation by looking at the list of major problems in public school in the 1940’s and 1950’s and then today. In the 1940’s and 50’s on that list of problems 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 must 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. Horace 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 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, in Dewey’s view 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...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.

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 primarily to the parents and, also, to the church. Let’s look at the church first. One of the qualifications of an elder is in 1 Timothy 3:2b is “...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 as the head of the home, it is ultimately the Father in the home who is responsible.

Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV): “Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

Deuteronomy 6:7 (ESV): “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.”

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, 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 alongside 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.