

Christian Education Idols and Other Sins – *Psalm 19:12-13*

Introduction – If you have been a part of this church for any length of time, you know our commitment to obey the Lord’s command to bring our children up in the training (paideia) and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). That fact is pretty settled among us – so why preach a sermon on Christian education each year? One reason is because the devil hates our attempts to obey God in this. He wants that generation and he has much in place to bait and trap them and he is going to fight hard to thwart our attempts to pull this off. And so first, I want to let Scripture instruct and remind us of the scope and breadth of a Christian education. Second, I want to remind us of the war for the souls of our children that is the American system of education. And finally, I want to admonish us away from the idols and sins that can be found in our own hearts, homes, and schools.

The Three Books of Psalm 19 – At first glance Psalm 19 seems to be about two kinds of revelation. The first is the revelation of God’s creation and the second is the revelation of God’s Word. However, it might be better understood to be the book of creation (vv1-6), the book of the law (vv7-11), and the book of the conscience (vv8-13) with a closing prayer regarding the appropriate response to all three (v14). With all three books, outside of the work of God’s Spirit, we will find ourselves staring stupidly at what is right before us.

Revelation and Education – Education, the paideia of the Lord, is the complete enculturating of the student into the wisdom and ways of God, and all three books of Psalm 19 must be used to do so. A Christian student must learn that “*the heavens declare the glory of God,*” meaning that in every discipline of study we must find the glorious handprints of our Creator. The student must learn to see all of creation and all of society, both man-to-God and man-to-man, in light of God’s law and special revelation of His Word. And finally, the student must come to understand who he is in creation and in relation to this revealed God, now fully revealed in Jesus Christ (Heb 1:2, John 14:9).

The Impossibility of Neutrality in Education – If everything revealed is from God, then it follows that everything revealed has His handprints on it, be it history, chemistry, sociology, economics, or your neighbor and his dog. And consider that all knowledge must be received and evaluated in a mind filled with presuppositions, which is why God gave us this one: “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*” (Prov 1:7). The fundamental assumptions about the nature of truth, goodness, and beauty are either submissive to or in rebellion to the declared Word of God. Education, therefore, is one of the most religious things we do.

The Fallout All Around – But this is the very lie we have been perpetuating for several generations in our “Christian” country; we declare that a secular education is religiously neutral. This year 88% of kids pre-K – 12th grade will be in our government, secular, God-denying school system; many of those come from “Christian” homes. When it comes to your education, we are told, God doesn’t matter. But consider – with religious neutrality being the basis of teaching history/biology/etc., Darwinian evolution wins the day and with that we have “evolved” into a people who do not know who we are, where we came from, what gender means, and most importantly, why any of this matters in any ultimate sense. The result? In 1990 we already had 8% of our society identifying themselves as “non-religious.” Today that number is 20% and as high as 33% in people 18-29 years of age. In addition, the statistics of Christian kids going off to secular universities and rejecting their faith is staggering.

“I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt...I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth.” – Martin Luther

Christian Education Idols and Sins – We have turned away from the government education system for two principled reasons. First, there is no biblical warrant for the civil government to be the responsible party for the education of children. The responsibility for that rests squarely on the shoulders of fathers. Second, we reject the notion that an education can be religiously neutral and therefore we recognize that a secular education is a rival religion. But just as Israel was brought up out of Egypt only to find that she herself had her own idols and sins, so too we must beware of our own temptations as we come out of our own “Egypt.” In observing Christian education for over 30 years, here are the top few I see.

Pharisee-Syndrome – The first Pharisees were probably of the school of Ezra and were well intentioned in their desire to reform the Jews to piety. But what started out faithful soon went to seed because it wasn't coming from faith but from a works-based mindset. Educators spend countless hours working on curriculum, choosing and developing methods, and prepping for classes. All of this must come from faith and by faith in Jesus Christ as Lord over it all – and Lord over you. **Deut 6:4-5 Before Deut 6:7-9** – You cannot provide a Christian education if you do not love God. This sounds obvious but is overlooked so often. The paramount reason that you should want a Christian education for your child is because you love God.

Personal Holiness – David asked for cleansing from secret sin, sins he might not even be aware of himself, because “*who can understand his errors?*” (Psalm 19:12). Part of being upright is recognizing how bent we are. He also asked to be delivered from presumptuous sins, those high-handed sins that we knowingly commit (v13, Matt 6:13). If he is delivered from them, they will not have dominion over him (and over the classroom, or your kids). Many Christian schools and homeschools have imploded in a final *great transgression* (v13) because they did not heed this warning upon their consciences.

Demanding a Love for Learning without Giving One – Do your children see your love for God, your love for His Word, your love for His people, your love for Sunday worship? Do you children see flowing from that your love for the world God made and a love for learning about it in lots of ways? They will pick that up (or not) from you.

Making an Idol of Christian Education – This one is subtle. Christian Education is not our Savior. Homeschooling is not your children's Savior. That Christian School is not either. You are not to trust the gifts that these are. You are to trust the Giver of the gifts. You are not to put your hope in this or that method. You are to put your hope in the God of the promises (Psalm 103:17-18, Acts 2:39).

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Notes for Little Saints

Write out Deuteronomy 6:4

Look up Mark 12:30 – What additional phrase does Jesus add to this command?

As you begin a new school year, how will you apply this additional phrase?

One more: Write out Proverbs 1:7

According to this verse, where should all our education begin?

Think about that as we sing the song following the sermon.