

Education for the Kingdom of God Distinctives and Promises of a Biblical Christian Education An Article for the Chalcedon Report

Ronald Kirk
Created March 19, 2002
Modified February 29, 2012

Distinctives and Promises of a Biblical Christian Education

In pursuing a Biblical Christian education, we must articulate a vocabulary for Christian liberty and accomplishment sufficient to build a universal setting for the Great Commission work and godly living. Because of the effective displacement in our time of a practical Biblical framework of life, these concepts may seem novel. For some, new ideas require time and reflection to appreciate their real power and potential. For others, these may be familiar ideas applied in a new way. I speak to serious, thoughtful, abiding Christians who see their family and personal lives as important elements of the gospel work. It takes a humble heart to let the Lord work us over to accomplish a profound and true education. Yet, such is the nature of our calling (*1 Pet. 1:6-7*). Therefore, please carefully consider the following elements of a Biblical approach to education.

Parental Involvement

Parents ought to acquire the power and ability to educate their children. A Biblical system of education ought to provide the home with the vision and tools necessary to fulfill the parental responsibility to educate the family (*Dt. 6; Eph. 6*). While parents may rightly delegate some authority to other teachers, according to the Biblical principle of specialization (*e.g., 1 Cor. 12*), final responsibility for the education of children remains with the parents.

A modest investment of time in the study of a few basic Biblical educational principles will allow parents and professional educators to use almost any curriculum more effectively. Educationally minded parents and teachers tell me, "We need a curriculum and we need it now!" As a home school dad and servant to numbers of home school parents, I have great compassion. The good news is a systematic Biblical scholarship will unite all areas of life. A few Biblical principles govern a diversity of subjects and issues. My Biblical and creedal faith and experience declare that a concise and intensive investment in the basic Biblical principles of life and learning enable the typical parent or teacher to take command over whatever content and curriculum may be available. While increasingly greater excellence requires increasingly better curriculum content, it is wrong to wait until the ideal somehow arrives. Indeed, getting from here to there, the educational struggle produces the best results in teacher and student alike. God rewards the investment of faith.

Christian Scholarship

A Christ-centered scholarship produces understanding of how life ought to be. The challenge is to develop a method of scholarship that leads directly to application of sound Biblical doctrine. For example, the many Scriptures dealing with children — their natural foolishness and the need for training and instruction — lead us to abandon the modern child-centered psychology of permissive parenting. Likewise, the concept of Christian liberty is one of the most important but typically underdeveloped

Education for the Kingdom of God

Distinctives and Promises of a Biblical Christian Education

An Article for the Chalcedon Report

Ronald Kirk
Created March 19, 2002
Modified February 29, 2012

aspects of Scriptural teaching about man and how a Christ-centered society should look. An historical method of scholarship identifying any subject Biblically and then drawing conclusions for application supplies an amazingly powerful instrument for gospel influence.

Children and adults love learning. An astounding side effect of my attempt to implement a thoroughly Biblical view of education is that children, even kindergartners, quickly grow to love learning and the liberty arising from doing what is right. The children work hard and are happy. Similarly, adults discover, with the right tools and faith, a new or renewed interest in and willingness to learn. Such an experience corresponds to the record of early America's high degree of moral and material accomplishment.

Adults and children find ready mastery in a short time. A Biblical psychology and answerable method provide proper foundations for continual growth, and a clear pattern for expanding and deepening the subject. This is true with even a moderate investment in effort by a relatively unaccomplished individual. One key to such a result is the steady application of the mind, by faith in Christ, to master the basic principles and skills of any subject. Thoroughly laying a sound foundation leads to subsequent rapid development. We often call this "slowing down to hurry up." Work at the task at hand, trust the Lord with a whole heart, and in due season He will bring the increase. Such an overcoming faith finds success in every area of endeavor.

True and Trustworthy Ways

Biblical doctrine and educational methods are trustworthy. This may sound outlandish in our age of skepticism and competing ideas. Nonetheless, the basic doctrines of the Faith have withstood the test of time. Furthermore, the Bible itself readily feeds and corrects our understanding. Admittedly, our comfortable, personal point of view may rub hard against the Word of God, but then this is the nature of a faith-based system of life and decision-making. Indeed, we lay down our lives to gain them. Man's way is the way of death (*Pr. 16:25*). Therefore, while it is true that a Biblical educational method may stretch our trust in the Lord, it is just as clear that such a thing pleases God (*Heb. 11:17*). Nonetheless, it is important that we work toward an excellent and independent understanding of Biblical doctrine as a foundation for faith based life and learning. Even here, we maintain great confidence, as we trust our Savior to correct and improve us.

A Biblical educational approach is self-correcting. Because learning is essentially repentance in particular, we constantly seek to correct our view of God, man, and things, as well as our life practices, to increasingly conform to the image of Christ in thought and deed. Repentance is a way of life. Education is change, filling what lacks and correcting what is wrong.

Biblical worldview education is spiritual. We assume no other proper foundation for any human accomplishment than the fear of the Lord and the love of Jesus Christ. We assume that we must know God thoroughly and personally as the only sound basis for anything else we may seek to know. We accept Christ and Him crucified. When we self-consciously begin with Christ and His works, He is glorified and His children are blessed.

Education for the Kingdom of God

Distinctives and Promises of a Biblical Christian Education

An Article for the Chalcedon Report

Ronald Kirk
Created March 19, 2002
Modified February 29, 2012

Biblical worldview education is intellectual. Factions of the church have for too long minimized the importance of understanding and the active use of the mind in spiritual matters. The Scriptures do not split the nature of man vertically between the spiritual and the mental, but horizontally between an unregenerate spirit and mind as against a regenerate and godly spirit and mind (*1 Thes. 5:23*). Paul said that we are to be transformed — in our essential internal quality — by the renewing of our *minds*. A Biblical approach to learning seeks to align the head and the heart according to God's provision and grace for man.

A Biblical educational philosophy replaces the do-or-die performance/failure system. Modern education either exacts instant accomplishment or so lowers the standard that no one truly achieves. Rather, faith applies itself to a process of continuous growth, regardless of native ability or present accomplishment, through diligence and a persevering trust of Christ to bring the increase in due season. Add a developmental sequence reflecting the subject's true nature and success will come. Only effective rebellion against the process constitutes failure.

The Results

One of the most significant results of this method is the development of Christian character. Character grows upon loving instruction, directed practice, example, and correction when needed. This is preparation of the heart for grace. The character of Christ stands firmly on principle in any circumstance and is faithful, steadfast, diligent, cheerful, and loving. Character governed by the Holy Spirit is the spiritual vessel for all achievement.

Biblical commandments and principles displace secular values, methods, and ideas. Biblical principles are statements of applied theology. Upon a commitment to self-consciously apply the doctrines of the Faith and cultivate the courage to learn, the saying, "Old ways pass away, behold, all things are new," becomes a reality (*2 Cor. 5:17*).

Godly individuality produces personal effort, responsibility, and accomplishment. True individuality is possible only in relation to and with dependence upon Christ. Upon His excellence, power, and grace, education draws out God's unique gifts, calling, and purposes. A Biblical philosophy of education stresses individual moral responsibility and duty to produce fruit in the community. Thus, loving one's neighbor becomes a reality. Biblical principles govern human relationships supporting the greatest expressions of Biblical love or agapé from the most personal to the greatest spheres of civil government and international relations.

This method of education self-consciously trains Christian leaders. Christian leadership assumes a servant's heart with the confidence of godly authority. Christian leadership finely balances the seemingly contradictory traits demanded of the mature Christian. For example, these include accomplishment without pride, hard work and productivity without greed, liberty under law and conviction of heart with forbearance to others. The principle of stewardship puts our lives, careers, Christian liberty, conscience, and possessions into God's hand as resources for His gospel purpose.

Biblical education replaces ineffective graded, lockstep, and linear processes. Rather, we implement processes that address individual ability and cumulative learning, even in a group. Thus, no

Education for the Kingdom of God
Distinctives and Promises of a Biblical Christian Education
An Article for the Chalcedon Report

Ronald Kirk
Created March 19, 2002
Modified February 29, 2012

one is left behind or held back. Learning is not linear. Rather, as Van Til describes it, learning is a spiral. Accumulation of accomplishment results from the systematic return to various related topics in a given subject, each time going a degree deeper. Progress based on actual accomplishment replaces artificial age or grade based standards. Such a reciprocal approach to learning avoids educational gaps.

In the light of Scripture and providential history, each subject reflects God's truths. God stamps creation with the imprint of His law and ways (*Ps. 85:11*). Thus, the teacher identifies God's revealed wisdom — His Word — through the subject. The Word corrects and directs empirical learning. The traditional Christian liberal arts teach the student the greatest Christian ideas and expression, while helping to form the mind with a powerful Biblical reasoning and communication ability. Certain unique insights of the Christian heritage contribute to the body of wisdom, particularly the doctrines of liberty.

A complete study upon the Biblical heritage of education should be the beginning of wisdom for living out the great Christian adventure and making a personal contribution to the gospel. For increasing numbers of Christians, the traits above compel us. These things promise to restore the adjective *Christian* to the present era, providing the societal and civil foundations of liberty and prosperity necessary to sustain and expand the gospel work into all nations.

Please contact Ron Kirk at ronaldwkirk@goldrush.com with your questions, and comments.