

FORGET NONE OF HIS BENEFITS, *volume 7, number 2, January 10, 2008*

Fathers. . .bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, Ephesians 6:4.

Christian Education

I am not unaware that I have been touching on some sensitive topics of late and this is another one. I don't intend to heap guilt on people. My goal is to help you think through vital family issues. Wini and I made great sacrifices to place our children in Christian schools. She taught etiquette and art appreciation to supplement tuition costs, and we drove twenty miles one way each day for several years. We were not always able to keep them in Christian schools and because our children were athletes and no Christian schools were available in our community, they attended public high school. We did not consistently reach our goal of a thorough Christian education for our children. I mention this because we too had to struggle with lots of issues in making Christian education a priority and we did not always succeed.

R.J. Rushdoony has rightly noted that public education in America began with Unitarian Horace Mann and is founded on a non-Christian naturalistic philosophy which believes people are inherently good, that redemption through Christ is unnecessary, that the way to transform children is to educate them. I want to make a case for Christian education in today's world. What I am after is for parents to think through the issue of training their children. It makes no difference to me whether parents home school their children or put them in a Christian school, though admittedly some parents are better than others at teaching their children and not all Christian schools are equal. Also I am not suggesting your children ought to be sheltered their entire high school and college years from non-Christian people. When children are strong enough to stand against the crowd, when they can articulate the Christian faith and world view, then it may be acceptable to place them in the public school system to serve as salt and light to those around them. Having said this, however, I ask that you with pre-school or school age children, or those of you with grandchildren, think this through logically.

I am not saying you are not a Christian if you place your children in public schools. I am not saying you don't love your children and don't want the best for them. But I am reminding you of an undeniable Biblical principle, "Whatever you sow this you will also reap." There are consequences in everything we do. If you allow your children to be inundated with naturalistic philosophy and all that this means concerning sexuality, world view, and behavior then don't be surprised if they reject your faith by the time they are in high school. Would you not agree that this happens all the time? I bet you know lots of young people who attended your church but by the time they were in high school or college had walked away from the faith (admittedly this can also happen with children who attend Christian schools). This usually happens in freshman Anthropology or Biology where the professor mocks the Christian faith and the student has no weapons to refute the charges. Are there exceptions to the rule? Are there Christian young people

who have been in public schools from kindergarten through college who love Jesus and stand firm in the faith? Of course there are and I rejoice, but are you willing to wager the souls of your children that they will come out of such an experience unscathed?

I know the objections for Christian education. “I don’t have the money. . .I don’t think I should shelter my children from bad ideas, evil influences. . .Our public school system is the best in the state, providing outstanding education and extra-curricular activities. . .I don’t have the skill nor the patience to teach my children at home. . .The Christian schools in our community are anti-intellectual, separatist, or racist. . .Our public school has lots of Christian teachers, even a Christian principal and they do all they can to bring up Christian themes at Christmas and Easter. . .I want my children to have opportunities in school sports, plays, or other cultural opportunities and Christian schools simply cannot provide these things. . .”

Lack of money is no doubt a problem for some. That’s why churches and individuals, who have the ability, ought to establish a fund to help pay the tuition of such children. Our church has such a fund. When people accused me of sheltering our children when they were young by putting them in a Christian school, I said, “You are exactly right. That is precisely what I am doing. They are like young tomato plants in a green house in a New England winter. They are not strong enough to withstand the natural elements. After being in the greenhouse for a sufficient time, then I can plant them in the world of harsh realities.” Perhaps your school system is the best in the state, offering all sorts of extra-curricular activities. Perhaps your school system has many devoted Christian teachers and administrators who seek to make a difference. That’s great and you are blessed to have such dedicated and loving Christian leaders, but no matter how dedicated they may be, their hands are tied. They are not allowed to teach from a Christian world view. This is not simply a matter of trying to force prayer back into public schools or hoping to get a place at the science table with intelligent design. The entire bent of public education is toward naturalism, a denial of a sovereign God who directs and disposes all things. It is a denial of the very essence of Christianity- a creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by a personal God, the fall into sin, and redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This colors everything in public education.

Perhaps you don’t have the patience or skill to home school your children and maybe the Christian schools in your community are sub-par. Okay, why not hire a young woman to home school your children for you, going in with several other parents and start your own home school cooperative. And Tim Tebow, the recent Heisman Trophy winner, is destroying the last obstacle to home schooling or Christian schooling for parents who want their children to have all the sports and cultural opportunities for which they pay through their property taxes. Tim Tebow never attended school until he enrolled at the University of Florida. He was home schooled all the way through high school, and he was allowed by the Florida High School Athletic Association to play football for the local high school, though he never attended classes there. More and more states are allowing home school kids to take advantage of what is offered at the local public schools.

So, I am just raising the question- why are your children in a public school? Have you really thought through what they are getting each day?

FORGET NONE OF HIS BENEFITS is a weekly devotional by Reverend Al Baker, pastor of Christ Community Presbyterian Church in West Hartford, Connecticut.

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