



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

QUEST LESSON F-7

The Problem: What kind of education should young people be given? The answers to that question will be as varied as people's philosophy of life. Those educators who do not believe in the hereafter will emphasize training for this life as the prime consideration in education. Their concerns will be entirely secular, and they will seek to induct the youth into their society, giving them the necessary skills to function in trades and professions that will be useful and economically remunerative.

Christian education has a much more profound concern. Since Christians believe that Christ is the only means of eternal salvation, they seek to introduce the youth to Him. Christian education is designed to lead students to the Lord and qualify them to present the Gospel to others. Training for this life is undoubtedly a Christian enterprise. Christian education will not neglect the student's orientation to his society or his preparation to fill a particular role in a trade or profession. But since for the Christian, this life is a temporary sojourn, and the real issue is to prepare for eternal life with Christ, that goal will be constantly helped up before the student.

Such a philosophy of education affects every branch of learning. Whether the subject being studied is history, science, math, or music, the approach of the Christian teacher and student will inevitably be molded by the worldview of Jesus Christ. Science becomes an investigation of God's created handiwork. History is seen as the ongoing controversy between the forces of good and the forces of evil in our world, culminating in the triumph of Christ's Kingdom at the end of time. Music is an expression of the soul's love and longing for the Lord. The medical training given to doctors, dentists, nurses, etc., is always with a view to relieving human suffering and need as Jesus did so that the healing of the body is related to the healing of the spirit. The goal is to introduce the sufferer to Christ as the world's great Healer and Savior.

Such a philosophy is not readily understood by non-Christians. They tend to regard the emphasis on the hereafter as unrealistic or irrelevant altruism based on a theology that they do not recognize as truth. One of the purposes of Christian education is to provide the student with the knowledge to answer that objection. Since he believes in the Christian Gospel himself, he needs to know how to teach it convincingly to others.

As we draw nearer to the second coming of Christ Christian education becomes more and more important. Jesus stressed the importance of divine knowledge for those who would prepare a people to live with Him forever.

We turn now to the Scriptures to see what they say about this kind of education. And we will note also some of the special counsel on education given by Ellen G. White. Her books on Christian education are classics in their own right. (See Ellen G. White, *Education*; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*.)

Objectives

First, we ask, what are the most important principles of Christian education?

Second, we study the education provided by God in ancient Israel.

Third, we consider Christ the Master-Teacher.

Fourth, we note the importance of the Bible as an educator.

Fifth, Christian education involves training for life's work.

Sixth, we shall give a brief introduction to the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of Christian education and a statement concerning the church's school system.

I. What Are The Most Important Principles Of Christian Education?

The most important principles emerge from the Scriptures as we consider man's original creation, his fall into sin, and the purpose of God to restore him to the image of Christ.

The Word

1. What is the source and aim of true education? Colossians 2:2-3; Job 12:13; 22:21; Proverbs 2:6.
2. What was a man like when God first created him? Genesis 1:27.
3. What happened when man fell into sin? Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Ephesians 2:1-3.
4. What does Christ wish to do for all fallen humanity? Ephesians 2:4-8; 1 Peter 1:15-19.

Explanation: "Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is a need for a broader scope and a higher aim. True education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.

The source of such an education is brought to view in these words of Holy Writ, pointing to the Infinite One: In Him 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom.' Colossians 2:3. 'He hath counsel and understanding.' Job 12:13...

In these days much is said concerning the nature and importance of 'higher education.' The true 'higher education' is that imparted by Him with whom 'is wisdom and strength' (Job 12:13), out of whose mouth 'cometh knowledge and understanding.' Proverbs 2:6.

In a knowledge of God, all true knowledge and real development have their source, Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm, in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body, mind, and soul is beyond estimate.

In this communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. 'Acquaint now thyself with Him' (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind...

When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. 'God created man in his own image' (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal his image the more fully reflected the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase...

But by disobedience, this was forfeited. Through sin, the divine likeness was marred and well-nigh obliterated.

Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, and his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death. Yet, the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy, the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized, this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life." Education, pp. 13-16.

Relevance: Have you entered into the educative process that God designs for your life? Are you willing to cooperate with His plan of restoring you to His divine image?

II. True Education In Ancient Israel

The kind of education practiced by the patriarchs and later after Israel came out of Egypt put into effect God's plan of restoring His people to His spiritual image.

The Word

5. What kind of education did the Patriarchs give their children? Genesis 18:18-19.
6. What were the ancient Israelites instructed to teach their children? Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
7. What industrial school was established in the wilderness after the Israelites had left Egypt? Exodus 31:1-6.
8. What kind of schools were established by Samuel? 1 Samuel 19:18-21; 2 Kings 2:3; 4:38; 5:22.

Explanation: The Patriarchal system of education: "The system of education established in Eden Centered in the family. Adam was "the son of God" (Luke 3:38), and it was from their Father that the children of the Highest received instruction. Theirs, in the truest sense, was a family school.

In the divine plan of education as adapted to man's condition after the Fall, Christ stands as the representative of the Father, the connecting link between God and man; He is the great teacher of mankind. And He ordained that men and women should be His representatives. The family was the school, and the parents were the teachers.

The education centering in the family was that which prevailed in the days of the patriarchs. For the school thus established, God provided the conditions most favorable for the development of character. The people who were under His direction still pursued the plan of life that He had appointed 'in the beginning. Those who departed from God built for themselves cities, and, congregating in them, gloried in the splendor, the luxury, and the vice that make the cities of today the world's pride and its curse. But the men who held fast to God's principles of life dwelt among the fields and hills. They were tillers of the soil and keepers of flocks and herds, and in this free, independent life, with its opportunities for labor and study and meditation, they learned of God and taught their children of His works and ways." Education, pp. 33-34.

The industrial school in the wilderness: "What an industrial 'School was that in the wilderness, having for its instructors Christ and His angels!

In the preparation of the sanctuary and in its furnishing, all the people were to co-operate. There was labor for the brain and hand. A great variety of material was required, and all were invited to contribute as their own hearts prompted.

Thus, in labor and in giving they were taught to co-operate with God and with one another. And they were to co-operate also in the preparation of the spiritual building God's temple in the soul." Education, p. 37.

The schools of the prophets: "In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God. But the name was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God. For the training of such a class of teachers, Samuel, by the Lord's direction, established the schools of the prophets.

These schools were intended to serve as a barrier against the wide-spreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors. To this end, Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they studied the word and works of God, His life-giving power quickened the energies of mind and soul, and the students received wisdom from above. The instructors were not only versed in divine truth but had themselves enjoyed communion with God and had received the special endowment of His Spirit. They had the respect and confidence of the people, both for learning and for piety. In Samuel's day, there were two of these schools, one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjathjearim. In later times, others were established.

The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor in tilling the soul or in some mechanical employment. In Israel this was not thought strange or degrading; indeed, it was regarded as a sin to allow children to

grow up in ignorance of useful labor. Every youth, whether his parents were rich or poor, was taught some trade, Even though he was to be educated for holy office, a knowledge of practical life was regarded as essential to the greatest usefulness. Many, also, of the teachers supported themselves by manual labor." Education, pp. 46-47.

Relevance: Have you considered the great importance of choosing schools in which God's love and truth are appreciated? Is your home a school in which your children are taught the will and ways of Jesus Christ?

III. Christ The Master-Teacher

The manner in which Christ taught His disciples and the multitudes of people who gathered to hear Him illustrates the kind of education that God would have us provide.

The Word

9. Who is the Source of all true enlightenment? John 1:9-13; 8:12.
10. How did Jesus train His twelve first disciples? John 17:6; Matthew 5:1-2; 8:23; 9:10; 10:1.
11. What method did Jesus use in teaching the people? Matthew 13:34.
12. What use of nature did Jesus make in illustrating divine truth? Matthew 6:25-33; 13:1-9, 18-23.

Explanation: Christ the divine Teacher: "In the Teacher sent from God, Heaven gave to men its best and greatest. He who had stood in the councils of the Most High, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, was the One chosen to reveal in person to humanity the knowledge of God.

In Him was found the perfect ideal. To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become for this Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven." Education, pp. 73-74.

Jesus' training of the disciples: "The most complete illustration of Christ's methods as a teacher is found in His training of the twelve first disciples. Upon these men were to rest weighty responsibilities. He had chosen them as men whom He could imbue with His Spirit, and who could be fitted to carry forward His work on earth when He should leave it. To them, above all others, He gave the advantage of His own companionship. Through personal association, He impressed Himself upon these chosen collaborators. 'The Life was manifested,' says John the beloved, 'and we have seen it, and bear witness.' 1 John 1:2.

Only by such communion the communion of mind with mind and heart with heart, of the human with the divine can be communicated that vitalizing energy which it is the work of true education to impart. It is only life that begets life." Education, p. 84.

Christ's parable method of teaching: "For His own wise purpose, the Lord veils spiritual truths in figures and symbols. Through the use of figures of speech, the plainest and most telling rebuke was often given to His accusers and enemies, and they could find in His words no occasion to condemn Him. In parables and comparisons, He found the best method of communicating divine truth. In simple language, using figures and illustrations drawn from the natural world, He opened spiritual truth to His hearers and gave expression to precious principles that would have passed from their minds and left scarcely a trace had He not connected His words with stirring scenes of life, experience, or nature." Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 236.

Jesus use of nature to teach truth: "The Great Teacher Brought His hearers in contact with nature, that they might listen to the voice which speaks in all created things; and as their hearts became tender and their minds receptive, He helped them to interpret the spiritual teaching of the scenes upon which their eyes rested. The parables, by means of which He loved to teach lessons of truth, show how open His spirit was to the influence of nature and how He delighted to gather the spiritual teaching from the surroundings of daily life.

The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the sower and the seed, the shepherd and the sheep with these Christ illustrated immortal truth. He also drew illustrations from the events of life, facts of experience familiar to the hearers, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl, the fishing net, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the houses on the rock, and the sand. In His lessons, there was something to interest every mind, to appeal to every heart. Thus, the daily task, instead of being a mere round of toil, bereft of higher thoughts, was brightened and uplifted by constant reminders of the spiritual and the unseen." Education, p. 102.

Relevance: Have you allowed yourself to be taught by Christ? Do you use His methods when you teach others?

IV. The Bible As An Educator

We can safely say that no other book in history has had such a widespread, lasting, and profound influence on the lives of human beings as the Bible. This book, above all others, is the greatest textbook for both teachers and students.

The Word

13. Who is the central theme of the Bible? What does knowledge of Him do for you? John 5:39; 17:3.
14. What initial transformation of life is produced when God's Word is received into the heart? 1 Peter 1:23.
15. What special power does God's Word impart to life? Psalm 119:9-11; 1 Peter 2:2; John 17:17.
16. What special educational value does the Word possess? Psalm 119:105, 130; 19:8; 1 Timothy 3:15-17.

Explanation: "For the mind and the soul, as well as for the body, it is God's law that strength is acquired by effort. It is an exercise that develops. In harmony with this law, God has provided in His word the means for mental and spiritual development.

The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all. No one with the spirit to appreciate its teaching can read a single passage from the Bible without gaining from it some helpful thought. But the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort...

In searching out the various parts and studying their relationship, the highest faculties of the human mind are called into intense activity. No one can engage in such study without developing mental power...

And even greater is the power of the Bible in the development of the spiritual nature. Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship find his real life and development. Created to find in God his highest joy, he can find in nothing else that which can quiet the cravings of the heart, can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. He who with the sincere and teachable spirit studies God's word, seeking to comprehend its truths, will be brought in touch with its Author; and except by his own choice, there is no limit to the possibilities of his development." Education, pp: 123-125.

Relevance: Have you given the Bible a central place in your education? Do you use it to teach others about God's love and salvation?

V. Training For Life's Work

Education for this life involves spiritual or character development as well as professional training. Christian education emphasizes both. But spiritual growth is the more important of the two processes.

The Word

17. What should be the first ambition of every Christian believer? Matthew 28:19-20.

18. What does the Bible say about God's call for people to work in different trades and professions? 1 Corinthians 7:20-24; compare Mark 6:3; Acts 18:3; Colossians 4:14.
19. As we near the end of time what call to work for the lost is given to all Christians whatever their trade or profession? John 4:35-36; Matthew 9:37-38; 20:6-7.

Explanation: What should be the life work? "The specific place appointed us in life is determined by our capabilities. Not all reach the same development or do with equal efficiency the same work. God does not expect the hyssop to attain the proportions of the cedar, or the olive the height of the stately palm. But each should aim just as high as the union of humans with divine power makes it possible for him to reach.

Many do not become what they might because they do not put forth the power that is in them. They do not, as they might, lay hold on divine strength. many are diverted from the line in which they might reach the truest success. Seeking greater honor or a more pleasing task, they attempt something for which they are not fitted. Many a man whose talents are adapted for some other calling is ambitious to enter a profession and he who might have been successful as a farmer, an artisan, or a nurse fills the position of a minister, a lawyer, or a physician inadequately. There are others, again, who might have filled a responsible calling but who, for want of energy, application, or perseverance, content themselves with an easier place." Education, p. 267

A great witnessing program before Jesus comes: 'The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hasteth greatly.' Zephaniah 1:14. And a world is to be warned.

With such preparation as they can gain, thousands upon thousands of the youth and those older in years should be giving themselves to this work. Already, many hearts are responding to the call of the Master Worker, and their numbers will increase. Let every Christian educator give such workers sympathy and cooperation. Let him encourage and assist the youth under his care in gaining a preparation to join the ranks." Education, p. 271.

Relevance: Whatever your specific trade or profession in this life, your greatest task is to win souls for Christ. How can we neglect this great work when the end is so near and there are so many yet unwarned?

VI. The Seventh-Day Adventist Educational System

The Seventh-day Adventist Church conducts elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries all over the world. Because the Adventist people are committed to providing a Christian education for the youth, these institutions are conducted according to the principles laid down in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White.

The aim is to give each student the kind of education that will make possible the harmonious development of his spiritual, intellectual, and physical powers. Hence, Seventh-day Adventist schools strive to direct the students away from health-destroying and soul-destroying practices.

It is possible for a student to attend Adventist schools at every level of his education, beginning with the first grade and graduating with a doctorate in any one of a number of fields.

The purpose is to train Christian service workers who have trade and professional skills of various kinds. Teachers, preachers, nurses, physicians, dentists, stenographers, mechanics, engineers, scientists, etc., may receive their education in schools devoted to Christian ideals and to developing Christian characters for the Lord. Believing that the end of the world at the second coming of Christ is right upon us, we are dedicated to teaching the Advent message to the youth who come for training and to qualify them to pass on to others the principles of Christ's Kingdom.

Relevance: If you are still a student, have you thought seriously and prayerfully about attending a Christian school? If you are no longer a student, are you willing to encourage students within the sphere of your influence to attend Christian schools? You might be saving a soul and, through that one soul, a host of others whom he or she might lead to Christ. The spiritual need of our world is very apparent to everyone, and secular schools do not begin to meet it. When God has mercifully provided a means of Christian education, we do well to take advantage of it and support it all we can.

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. The Christian philosophy of education is based on Bible teaching.
 - b. Education was not important in Old Testament times.
 - c. Christ was and still is the source of all enlightenment.
 - d. The Bible is the greatest textbook for education.
2. Discuss: If Christ and His Word are the ultimate sources of truth, any philosophy of education that disagrees with Him must be false. Why then should we expose our youth to so much that is inconsistent with the Word of God? To be able to answer false teaching is one thing; to make it the center of one's educational program is quite another.