

Discipleship in the Home

3/14/23

Biblical/Jewish Principles of Education

- Parental responsibility - fathers are ultimately responsible for the education and training of their children
 - **Gen. 18:17-19, Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25, Prov. 1:1-9**
- End goal - knowledge of God, holy living, wisdom, contribution to society, formation of character and virtue (contrast with modern education's obsession with information and material, devoid of any moral framework - see Carl Trueman's work)
 - *The original purpose of Jewish education was to teach children to know and understand their special relationship with God, to teach them to serve him, and to educate them in "holiness." Later Jewish education included character development and the history of God's people (particularly through rehearsing his acts of deliverance). Because of that education, the Jews knew the Mosaic law and their own history, and during periods of subjection to foreign powers they were able to maintain their national pride. ("Education," Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.)*
 - Boaz is a great example of a well-educated man (in this sense) in Scripture - called "A worthy man" (**Ruth 2:1**)
 - Understood the nuances of the law, productive business, godly business practices, understood the times, heart of compassion and mercy, selfless use of authority and influence
 - Pillar in Solomon's temple named "Boaz" (**2 Chron. 3:17**)
 - Remember the values: Knowing God, Fatherhood, Relationship, Servanthood, Brokenness - application to education?
- Content
 - Knowledge of God (personal relationship with Jesus)
 - Understanding and embodiment of "holiness"
 - Personal - godly life, heart after God
 - Communal - Israel's unique calling as a people - to serve Yahweh exclusively and fully, to be light to the nations (Ex. 19:3-6)
 - History of the people of Israel (God's works in history)
 - Wisdom - application of eternal truths and principles in timely ways and specific situations
 - Specialized training
 - Vocational training, trade
 - Military training

- Cultic training (temple service)
- Methods
 - Immersion/memorization/recitation in the home, diligently led by the father
 - *From the earliest times it is clear that the family was the central institution in which learning occurred and continued to be so throughout the biblical period. The “content” of family education varied widely. We assume children were taught not only the skills and way of life of their parents, but also some of the basic values of the society and an orientation to the identity of ancient Israel (who we are, where we are, how we relate to the world around us, and why). The setting presumed for this all-important education is the home. (“Education,” Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible)*
 - *In later Jewish tradition a boy was generally considered to be an adult, at least from the religious point of view, as soon as the first signs of manhood became apparent, probably when he was twelve to fourteen years old. Thus, according to Rabbi Yehuda ben Tema (m. ’Abot 5:21):*
At five years, one is fit for the Scripture,
at thirteen for the commandments,
at fifteen for the Talmud,
at eighteen for the bride-chamber,
at twenty for pursuing (a calling),
at thirty for authority. (“Education: Ancient Israel,” The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary)
 - Psalms were important
 - *All this teaching was memorized not only by means of hearing but also through repetition and singing. Psalms played an important role in this regard, especially the psalms of meditation on history or on the instruction (tôrâ). The psalms were good pedagogical means for learning about the nation’s past and its foundational principles. (“Education: Ancient Israel,” The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary)*
 - Family involvement in the religious activity of the community
 - *At almost all times in Israel’s history the cult was an important center for education. The legal materials and the psalms offer much evidence of catechetical activity for those new to the stories and the faith of the people (cf. Deut. 6:20–25; Pss. 15, 24). Moreover, the cult is assumed to be a central place for speaking of and teaching the moral values of the society (e.g., the Decalogue, Exod. 20:1–17) and the expectations for behavior in all parts of the culture. In Judah the temple was a primary setting for both determining what needed to be taught and the actual proclamation and teaching itself. (ibid)*
 - Apprenticeship, either in father's trade or in mother's work at home
 - Schools
 - Local schools and universal education actually have Jewish roots

- *When fears of Hellenism were strong and the existence of Judaism was threatened in the 1st century BC, it was decreed that every Jewish boy should attend elementary school. Since such a system probably already existed, that decree merely made attendance compulsory for all males up to 16 or 17 years of age. No doubt the reason was that thorough knowledge and careful observance of the Law were vital to the survival of the Jewish heritage. Joshua ben-Gamala (high priest, AD 63–65) is considered the founder of universal education. His instructions for setting up schools in towns and villages were precise, requiring attendance of boys from the age of six or seven years. The community was responsible for setting up a school and maintaining a teacher in any town where there were 10 Jewish families. Fathers were required to see that their sons attended school. ("Education," Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.)*

Our current situation

- Public schools
 - A broken system by nearly all metrics
 - Pedagogically opposed to the purposes of the Kingdom
 - However, in some cases, a passable solution to a particular child/family's needs
- Private schools
 - Some are religiously "affiliated" but not ultimately rooted in a local church
 - Often as worldly or even more worldly than public schools
- Classical, Christian schools
 - Trinity
 - LLS
- Homeschooling
 - Curriculum?

How we do education

- Most of us homeschool - why?
 - Often the best way to truly fulfill our responsibility as parents
- Mars Hill - this is a church-led effort to aid families in fulfilling their responsibilities as parents if they choose to homeschool
 - Christian
 - Knowing God, becoming like Jesus, creation mandate, great commission

- David (heart after God), Esther (for such a time as this), Sons of Issachar (understand the times to know what Israel ought to do), Daniel (know God, be strong and do exploits)
 - Community
 - Families are placed in relation to other families and find their unique identity within the context of local body life
 - Prioritizes values, likemindedness, common life, over any isolated educational aim
 - Extends beyond the CF churches
 - Overseen by pastors and elders of the CF churches
 - Cultivation of parental honor, respect for authority, high value of the work of studying, vital involvement in a local church
 - Classical
 - Western cultural heritage, great conversation, great books, Reformation and American Revolution - who we are as Americans
 - This is also where Latin comes in
 - Education
 - Transformation and preparation for a mission, not conformity to the present age
- Co-op
 - Another church-led effort to equip families in their calling
 - Not a program, but rather supplemental/enrichment to each family's homeschooling. Fills in some gaps created by homeschooling (classroom behavior, visibility into unique challenges).
 - Not a place to learn how to homeschool your kids
 - As much about building relationships with other mothers as the learning that goes on
 - Led by Brenda Henderson, Valerie Saylor, Emily Hughes - Ben Hughes serves as the dad on site and gives pastoral oversight
- Lexington Latin School
 - Originally founded by Cassie Corbett's mother (Jeremy and Cassie go to TCF, and there are several families they have walked with who are)
 - An excellent place to learn, stronger in its classicism, but not overseen by local pastors/elders and so not as deeply integrated into the specific aims of the local church (this is not a bad thing)

So what should we do?

- Mothers: process all educational decisions thoroughly with your husbands (or if that's impossible, a trusted pastor/elder), and also get perspective from older, wiser women. Fatherly authority must remain central within education.
 - We are not after the happiest kids, or kids who maximize their potential as individuals, but kids who have found their place within the purposes of God in their generation

- Fathers: walk with other godly men in carrying out your responsibilities; know the big picture; stay involved as much as you are able with the education of your kids
- Since Co-op and Mars Hill are the educational ministries directly overseen by the church, there will naturally and rightly be an inclination toward these, but neither is compulsory
 - Like any other "official" church functions - they exist because the pastors and elders have deemed them important to the church's mission to make disciples
- Nothing is compulsory and decisions are up to families
 - These are major decisions that intersect with your personal walk with God/discipleship, community life, and your children's futures in the kingdom of God
 - Find wise people whose lives bear the fruit of wisdom - home group leaders, disciplers, leading women, pastors, elders and talk through the issues with them
 - Get perspective and help for homeschooling from people in the community who have significant experience and have been successful at it
- Make decisions about education that are rooted in your answers to these questions:
 - What is my family's purpose and calling as disciples of Jesus and partners with other families in the work of the Kingdom?
 - What are my biblical responsibilities as a parent?
 - What is the end goal of education for my child?

Questions!