

THE AXIOMS OF EDUCATION

*"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.
For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.
For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.
He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.
Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.
Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.
Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.
Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.
She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.
Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.
I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.
When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."
- Prov. 4:1-13 -*

Here, and elsewhere in the Proverbs, we are able to learn many quintessential features of the instruction of our children in the Lord. Namely, that it be done in the Lord, and “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth” (I Cor. 2:13). That is not to say that our children have the Spirit of God, but if we expect them ever to have that Spirit then we must prepare them for it, and what better way than to teach them from their youth up of the fear of God. This is contrary to the methods of man in our modern schools. The motives for learning, the ruling principles for teaching, the methods of instruction, even to the very *end* of that education – all is corrupt and a mutilation at best of what God has divinely instituted for our children’s rearing.

Firstly, we see who is to be instructing, namely, the father and the mother. He mentions the love and affection of his father and mother (v.3) in direct regards of their instruction of him (“*For I was my father’s son, etc.*”). This behavior, inspired of God, was given us as rule for two reasons, which I will mention: 1st) For God has vouchsafed to the parents, and has secured to no one else (excepting the parents be judged unfit in the sight of heaven, then their “*bishopric*” is given to another), certain words and promises of *their* labors in the fields of their children’s hearts being rewarded with their subsequent salvation. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6). 2nd) God has ordained fear, honour, and obedience to be given from the children to their parents, and though this is to be learned towards all those their elder, yet it is most solemnly enjoined them towards their parents (Exo. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Eph. 6:1,2). This being wrought in the heart of the child by their loving parents from the very earliest moments of consciousness, whether by precept, discipline, nature, *etc.*, lays a foundation in the heart of the child to, in time, fear their mother and father most naturally as their instructor. Thus it is granted in the scripture as the most natural and pleasing – both to God and man – of all options concerning who should be the instructors of our children.

This obviously is lost when we, from the very laying of the foundation of our children’s education, put them under one whom they have never been thoroughly trained

to fear, honour and obey. And that's not all, but under many instructors of whom may all have differences in their standards and expectations concerning their pupils. And this, of course, does nothing to improve our children's godly instruction, but rather confuses it.

Secondly, what is intimated throughout these verses is explicitly stated in v.13, "Instruction is thy life." This is to prove the importance and significance of education, first to the teacher, then to the student. With this the child lives, and without it the child dies. This is surely something the parent should count on: without instruction your child will perish! This matter of education is a matter of life and death, of heaven or hell. Would to God the universities would at least teach this much to those instructors they are producing! Alas! a whole generation slipping into the abyss of a God-less eternity, and all because this sacred truth was ignored by the teacher. It is so. The instructing of our children is not meant to be a mere instructing of their minds, but of their never-dying souls.

This brings us to, *thirdly*, what ought to be the motivating factors in the hearts of our children in their "getting" of wisdom. These are so much different than the modern antics of our school teachers today, that they are not only a mockery to the God who ordained education (yea, and that "possessed" wisdom "in the beginning of his way" (Pro. 8:22)), but a mockery to the very souls of the children entrusted into their care. To reduce eternal life into a lollypop! What a sham these children are being made to trust in. The lollypop in time is exchanged for a cap and gown, then for a fine career, and then finally for an early retirement and a fat 401k. How pathetic! when God would seek to impart into the malleable mind of a child the motivation of *eternal life*! How then will the child yearn to learn when he knows that it is for his very life (v.4)! Without it what will be the preservative (v.6a) to keep back the pent-up sparks of hell fire in the child's heart already set to fly upwards? How will he be kept (v.6b) from all of those sins which provoke the wrath of God to fall upon the heads of froward sinners? And how shall he be promoted (v.8) to an entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom without highly exalting wisdom? How will his head ever be crowned (v.9) with the laurel of salvation without it?

All of these, and many more, are the only proper, God-ordained motivations for our children's receiving wisdom and instruction.

Fourthly, the very foundation (yea, the only foundation) upon which a proper education can be built – the only one that will end in salvation – is the *fear of God*. When a child knows that there is a heaven or a hell that shall be gained based upon their behavior, this begins, even in the youngest of souls, to produce a longing to find peace with this God. This is the fear of God. One of the greatest subversions of this fear, is the modern philosophy behind education. A godly education would only nurture and answer the child's desire to find peace with God; whereas, the modern philosophy of education (which is really the old *American dream* repackaged to fit the 21st century's lusts) completely distracts this desire and replaces it with self-esteem and self-growth. From the beginning, the child should hear that they are now to learn to read – not to make something of themselves, or to get rich one day –but because God is a God that will be sought, and he has condescended in such a way to these poor, fallen creatures, so as to give us means whereby we may know him, and that is the Bible. And thus the anxious soul embarks upon its journey of wisdom, with one goal: God himself.

This brings us to our last, and *fourth* point, namely the chief end of education. That which is the beginning is also the end: the *fear of God*. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). The fear of God, says the preacher, is not just the end of life (it is), but of all matters. And so we find it the great end of all of those hours of study, all of the books read, all of our year’s experience, every observation made: the *fear of God*. The end is not a diploma, letters, doctorates, a six figure income, *etc.*, it is the *fear of God*. And let no man lay any other foundation, lest he be found with the blood of poor innocents upon his hands. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psa. 111:10; Pro. 9:10). As the beginning, so is the end, *unequivocally*, the *fear of God*.