

WHY WE NEED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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More than seven hundred years before Christ, God's prophet Amos, spoke a prediction we are seeing fulfilled in 2007 A.D. He proclaimed God's message to the people, saying: "'The days are coming,' declares the Sovereign Lord, 'when I will send a famine through the land--not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord'" (Amos 8:13 NIV). It is important to understand that spiritual famine occurs when there is a lack of "hearing the words of the Lord." Jesus, the very Word of God, said of Himself, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35 NIV).

In Bible times an important function of the priest was teaching. Example: Eli the priest who trained the boy Samuel in duties and functions of the priesthood. Priests were spiritual leaders who taught God's people His laws and stressed the importance of hearing and obeying them.. Priests had the awesome responsibility of representing God to His people, and the people to God. Corresponding spiritual leaders in our day are the pastors/ministers. Our churches should train/disciple godly men and women to raise godly children.

God spoke through Moses to give the plan for teaching children. It was to be the responsibility of parents. It was spelled out in detail as a commandment (not a suggestion!) from God in Deuteronomy 6:5-9, 17-18: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **IMPRESS THEM ON YOUR CHILDREN.** Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands (remember them as you do things) and bind them on your forehead (keep them in your thoughts). Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates Be sure to keep the commands of the lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you."

Another Scriptural example of parents realizing the need for godly education is found in Judges 13:8 (NIV). When Manoah, Samson's father, was told he would have a son "Manoah prayed: 'O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God (an angel of the Lord) you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.'" This may be the first record of "homeschooling!"

Listen to Jesus' final command as He leaves his disciples with the awesome task of proclaiming the Gospel: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing. . .and **TEACHING THEM** to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV).

How are parents to carry out these God-given commands? They must have a love for the importance of God's Word, a knowledge of its messages, and a compelling desire to give their children as a Christian worldview—one which includes God's sovereign care and rule in every area of life. Primary sources for this knowledge and inspiration should be from their pastor/minister who proclaims and teaches the Word, Bible study programs (including Sunday School), and support and encouragement from their church family.

Scripture shows us that Pastors/Ministers wear many hats-- “teachers,” “planters/farmers,” “shepherds,” and “builders.” In I Corinthians 3:6—15 (NIV) Paul described himself as a planter/farmers of the Word, saying, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” In that same passage he explained the work of the spiritual leader as a builder: “I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. . . If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.”

Ezekiel spoke God’s message to the priests as teachers of his day saying, “They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezekiel 44:23 MIV) Moses spoke as a teacher to the generation entering the Promised Land: “See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded. . . Teach them to your children and to their children after them (Deuteronomy 4:5, 9 NIV).

A recurring designation in Scripture for a spiritual leader and caregiver is that of “shepherd,” with Jesus Himself saying, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:14 NIV). The writer of Hebrews prays a benediction on his readers, ending his prayer in the name of “our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep. . . Jesus Christ.” (Hebrews 13:20 NIV).

The pastor-shepherd guides, guards, protects, and provides for his “flock,” by teaching, leading, and directing his sheep. This should include a total education for each person, not just spiritual instruction. The familiar reference to the “Three R’s” must also include a fourth “R”—Religion/Bible. This fourth “R” is now attacked or totally absent in our present public education system, leaving a vast empty area in children’s education which is being rapidly and eagerly taken over by secular and humanistic ideologies.

What is the solution? Examine copies of Literature, Science, and Social Studies textbooks used by children in your “flock.” Evaluate them in the light of God’s Word and information about America’s Christian heritage. Do they teach a Christian worldview, clearly explaining strong Christian principles on which our nation was founded?

In “The Baptist Faith and Message—XII Education” we find this statement: “The cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ’s people.” A related Scripture in this section is Colossians 2:8 (NIV): “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

It is foolish to assume that instruction in the short time spent in Sunday School and the preaching service on Sunday morning can counter the teaching received in five full school days of worldly, humanistic teaching. We may find we are guilty of producing a generation of biblical illiterates. Try this little “pretest” in your high school and adult Sunday School classes.

How many years have you attended Sunday School and Sunday worship services? Name the books of the Bible. Quote John 3:16. List the Ten Commandments. Name five people in the Old Testament and tell three facts about each one. Name five people in the New Testament and tell three facts about each one. Tell how to

become a Christian—the plan of salvation. What is the Golden Rule? Is it really in the Bible? If so, give the reference. Name the Four Gospels and tell what important information they give us.

Scores from those who have been members of some Baptist church for many years will indicate the effectiveness, or failures, of our Bible teaching. One other question may be important. Would members in your congregation be surprised to find the information contained in “The Baptist Faith and Message”?

What are options for a Baptist pastor who realizes he should engage his people in providing a Kingdom education? An ideal solution might be to start a Christian school in his church. If this is not possible, supporting a Christian school already in operation could be found. A final option would be to encourage parents to homeschool their children with the church offering support by providing information, facilities, spiritual guidance from the staff or capable church members, and even financial assistance for the purchase of texts, other materials, and activities.

Finally, Romans 14:12 reminds us that God Himself will give us a "final grade" when ". . . every one of us shall give an account of himself to God (NIV)." Kind of scary, isn't it! God help us every one to make a wonderful "passing grade!"