



Ministry of Biblical Studies

JUNE BIBLE STUDY SERIES

"The Words of the Wise: True Education"

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Ministry of Biblical Study Classes
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“The Words of the Wise: True Education”

True education means more than pursuing a certain course of study. It has to do with the whole person, and with the whole period of existence possible to human beings. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.

The source of such an education is brought to view in these inspired words that point to the Infinite One: In Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:3.

The world has had its great teachers, men and women of giant intellect and extensive research, people who have stimulated thought and opened to view vast fields of knowledge. But there is One who stands higher than they. As heavenly bodies in our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world.

In these days much is said concerning the nature and importance of “higher education.” The true “higher education” is that which is imparted by Him out of whose mouth “come knowledge and understanding.” Proverbs 2:6.
All true knowledge and real development have their source in a knowledge of God.

Wherever we turn, in the physical, mental, or spiritual realms; in whatever we observe and study, 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 human mind is brought into communion with

the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. In this communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. "Acquaint yourself with Him" (Job 22:21) is God's message to the human family. The method outlined in these words was the method followed in the education of Adam and Eve.

Education is, first of all, a family matter, and true education comes, first and foremost, from the parents. In these verses, this education is called "instruction" and even "law." The Hebrew word for law, torah, means "direction." The parents are to point their children in the right direction. In contrast, the other type of "education" is not identified, not given a name. It is simply acknowledged as the voice of sinners, which leads in the wrong direction.

Also, the words "my son," not to be taken in a gender exclusive sense, are repeated many times, emphasizing parental instruction. Each parent — "your father," "your mother" (NKJV) — is clearly identified in the singular and is personally involved, while the other camp is an anonymous plural, "sinners."

"In His wisdom the Lord has decreed that the family shall be the greatest of all educational agencies. It is in the home that the education of the child is to begin. Here is his first school. Here, with his parents as instructors, he is to learn the lessons that are to guide him throughout life. . . . The educational influences of the home are a decided power for good or for evil. . . . If the child is not instructed aright here, Satan will educate him through agencies of his choosing."

The best argument on behalf of family education is its results. These are the inner qualities of character, which are like ornaments on the head and around the neck. In the Middle Eastern culture precious collars and bracelets were passed on from parents to children as a heritage of value. Education matters more, though, than material riches. The time spent with our children will be of much greater value for them than the time spent at our businesses.

Also, the reference to the neck and the head, which is the individual's face, suggests that education will shape his or her personality. In the way of fools or sinners, only the feet (Prov. 1:15) are mentioned, as if the wayward son had lost his identity.

How can we learn to resist the temptations that culture, society, friends, even family might throw our way?

Solomon wrote, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Any student who has pulled an all-nighter, crammed for a test, memorized an equation, or pored over a textbook can verify the truth of that statement. Solomon's point was that there are more important things than simply amassing knowledge—namely, fearing God and obeying Him (verses 13-14).

That is not to say that education is unimportant. In fact, Jesus Himself learned. One of the only things we know of His childhood is that He "grew in wisdom" as He grew "in stature" (Luke 2:52). That is, the Son of God voluntarily put Himself in a position where He needed to assimilate knowledge as a man. Education was part of the process.

The church has historically promoted education and the improvement of the mind. The Reformer John Calvin was a strong advocate for universal education, believing that every child should be trained in reading, writing, math, and grammar, as well as religion. Martin Luther taught that education was essential, "both to understand the Word of Scripture and the nature of the world in which the Word would take root." The modern Sunday school movement began in 1780 when Robert Raikes began educating poor children who were otherwise overlooked by society. Most universities, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Oxford, and Cambridge, were founded by Christians as religious schools.

In the book of Proverbs, a son is exhorted to heed his father's instruction, and the application of the knowledge learned is called wisdom. The word education may not appear in the English form in the Bible, but Scripture does say a lot about the process of education, and it begins with the parent and child. The command to parents is to nurture their children in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), and the Greek word *paideia*, translated "nurture" in the KJV, carries with it the idea of training, education, instruction and discipline.

Solomon tells us that the basis of all true knowledge is the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). The word fear here does not carry the idea of terror or dread; rather, it is awe and reverence for the holiness and majesty of God and a reluctance to disappoint or disobey Him. Jesus said that when we know the truth, the truth will make us free (John 8:32). Freedom from fear comes from being educated in Truth.

In Romans, the apostle Paul uses the word know or knowing eleven times. What are we to know? God's Word. When we acquire spiritual knowledge and apply it to our lives, we serve the Lord in spirit and truth (Romans 6:11-13). Theology has been called "the queen of the sciences" because our knowledge of God informs every other area of erudition.

The Christian is to "study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). The NIV renders this verse, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." The Greek word translated "study" means "to give diligence, to exert oneself, or to make haste to apply oneself." Therefore, in order to educate ourselves, we must apply ourselves to study with diligence the Word of God.

Some people see education as a cure-all for society's ills. However, education, in and of itself, does nothing to combat ungodliness. In fact, knowledge, apart from the love of God, leads to pride (1 Corinthians 8:1). Nicodemus was "Israel's teacher," yet he did not understand even the basics of spiritual life (John 3:10). Paul was a highly educated man, having been trained in the best Jewish school of his day (Acts 22:3), and he used his education to communicate effectively to people of many cultures (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). Yet Paul's education certainly did not make him holy (1 Timothy 1:16), and he warned of those who were "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). Simply knowing facts does not make one a better person, and it is indeed possible to be a highly educated fool.

Education begins with the reality of God's existence and the fact that He has communicated to us through creation, His Word, and His Son. As we learn more of God's creation, our understanding of God's wisdom and power deepens. As we study God's Word, we become more equipped for God's work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). As we grow in our knowledge of God's Son (2 Peter 3:18), our love for Him increases and our service for Him intensifies.

