

Minister's Message – October 2008

What to Teach Our Children

Schools and education are taken for granted in western society. In fact it is compulsory for children to go to school or be educated. It was not always this way, and still in some nations today many children do not get the opportunity to go to school. Schools were initially established so that children, and also adults, could learn to read and so be able to read the Bible. Christians still place a high value on education – beyond just reading their Bible nowadays, but still on education based upon the truth of the Bible. Many schools are opened and operated by Christians and churches.

Moses told the people of Israel to teach their children diligently – not in schools of course but in the home. Schools should be seen as extensions of the home not as substitutes for education in the home. ‘When you lie down and when you rise up, when you sit and when you walk, teach your children’ said Moses (Deuteronomy 6:7). What were they to teach their children? They were to teach their children how to live. They were to teach the commands that God gave telling them how to live. Each new generation was to learn these commands if they were to live and prosper in the land.

So what of education to today? Where are we teaching our children? What are we teaching our children? Are they being taught how to live? Communities complain about the way young people are living today – they are disobedient and disrespectful (see Romans 1:30), they binge drink and get onto drugs, they are sexually permissive. In school they learn mathematics, English and science, but what about how to live? Leaders have introduced classes on sex education and drug education, with questionable success. They think that information *per se* will solve all the problems of our youth.

Information can be used for good or bad purposes. Some students devise clever ways to cheat. Some criminals are very well informed! Education comes within a context. Children not only learn from books, but by example. What do they see from those who teach them these so called ‘value education’ courses? We are all familiar with the image of the father telling his son not to touch cigarettes while smoke wafts from the cigarette behind his back. Do those who frame these courses really know what to teach? There are often more questions than there are answers. Yet the cry continues – ‘we must teach values to our children’.

Quite a few parents realize that what Moses taught is a very good place to start. Teach what God commanded about how to live. After all, we are all made in the image of God, and live in the world that God made. As the wise man Solomon said *Train up a young child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it* (Proverbs 22:6).

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