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THE GREAT COMMANDMENT



The Great Commandment



A Most Important Question

In the Book of Matthew, the Bible records that a lawyer came to see Jesus. When this attorney came and presented himself to the Saviour, the Son of God, he asked Him one of the most important questions in all the world.

Although not in these same words, he inquired, "Master, in the Bible there are many commandments." The Jews had categorized the laws of God and found 613 different commands in the Old Testament. He continued, "I understand that we are supposed to obey these commands, but I have one question. Of the 613, which is the most important? What is the one commandment that, among all the others, the Son of God would say is to get the most attention? Which one is to get the greatest height of obedience in our lives?"

The First and Great Commandment

Jesus responded to the lawyer by saying, in Matthew 22:37-38,

“ . . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

Out of all the commandments that God had issued to mankind in His Word, Jesus clearly stated that this was the most important. He said that, above all else, we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds. Jesus further emphasized the importance of this command when He said that all of the law and all of the words of the prophets hang on the commandments given in Matthew 22:37-40.

A Little Background

When Jesus gave this great command, He was quoting directly from the Book of Deuteronomy. Developing an understanding, therefore, of the historical and cultural background of this passage will greatly increase its usefulness in our lives.

Our Western culture sometimes acts as a barrier to us in understanding the Scripture, which was written within the context of an Eastern culture. There are many Eastern concepts, which pertain to everyday life and which are readily understood by those within that culture, that can be misunderstood by people of a Western background. Similarly, for one of Hebrew heritage, numerous Biblical statements may be very clear and easily comprehended due to his background and experience. However, for those in a contrasting Western culture, these same statements may require extensive explanation. Psalm 78:5-7 serves as an excellent example of this cultural dilemma.

“For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God”

The “testimony” or “law” the Psalmist speaks of in verse five is not readily discernible to the Western mind. This lack of familiarity leaves the Western reader wondering just what exactly *is* the testimony or law that they should make known to their children. It is clear, then, that an understanding of the historical and cultural background of numerous Scriptures is a necessity if we are to derive the entire meaning of God’s words to their fullest extent.

Such a study reveals to us what the Hebrew mind took for granted: the “testimony” or “law” the Psalmist refers to is most certainly the law found in Deuteronomy chapter six. This portion of Scripture is known as the Shema, which means “to hear.” The

Israelites knew it was of utmost importance for man to hear and obey this greatest command of the Lord. This portion of Scripture is furthermore the same passage Jesus referred to when he answered the lawyer’s question about the Great Commandment. When we consider the importance of this passage to the Israelites, also remembering that Jesus Himself referred to verse five of this passage as the greatest commandment, we are compelled to realize that it is indeed of utmost importance.

A Closer Look

We need to carefully examine this instruction which God originally gave to the Israelites and which Jesus later quoted as the Great Commandment. Every parent, as well as every individual who ever has the privilege of being involved in the education of any child, must take this very seriously. God wrote His Word in order for us to have the privilege of obeying it unto a full and happy life. Let us, then, for the blessing of both ourselves and our children, look closely at the *Shema* of Deuteronomy six.

With our Western mentality, we think Deuteronomy 6:5 is the sum total of the Great Commandment. We have often heard this much and no more, so in our thinking the Great Commandment begins and ends with this verse.

However, the Israelite mind does not respond in this manner. In written Hebrew, there are no periods, question marks, or commas. How, then, we may wonder, can they tell when a sentence ends? They know by the grammatical construction of the writing. Hebrew sentences are not short and simple like most written in English. A Hebrew sentence could be more like a paragraph, especially if the text is of great importance. Such is the situation encountered in Deuteronomy six. The sentence begins with verse four and does not come to a stop until verse twelve.

Actually, this can be seen to some extent in the English translation. By mentally removing the punctuation marks, the flow of the sentence may be seen by the use of the conjunction “and.” Each

verse, from five through eleven, begins with this word. This indicates to the reader that he has not yet reached the end and that he should therefore continue reading. Look at the passage and note the number of times the word “and” occurs.

*“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,
and with all thy soul,
and with all thy might.*

*And these words, which I command thee this day,
shall be in thine heart:*

*And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,
and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house,
and when thou walkest by the way,
and when thou liest down,
and when thou risest up.*

*And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand,
and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

*And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house,
and on thy gates.*

*And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac,
and to Jacob, to give thee great
and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,*

*And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not,
and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards
and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten
and be full;*

Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Deuteronomy 6:5-12)

That is a total of twenty “ands”! The exact number of “ands,” of course, is not so important, but the contextual principle behind this is very important. The entire passage is the equivalent of one Hebrew sentence! Within the space of this one Hebrew sentence, the Lord states the principle of the Great Commandment, expands upon it, illustrates it, and closes it with a word of warning for those who forget the Lord. It is important to keep in mind that in the original language this is a contextual whole. It is not something to be taken apart, picking and choosing what we like and disregarding the rest.

How many times have we, however, glossed over the context of the Great Commandment and forgotten entirely to look at the “hows,” “whys,” and “wherefores” of this most important passage! If we are to fulfill this command to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, souls, and might, then we must find out what the Bible has to say about the way we are to do so. We can do this by studying the Great Commandment in its entire context of Deuteronomy 6:1-12. Verse one begins,

*“Now these are the commandments, the statutes,
and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it.”*

Remember when the Lord gave this word to the Israelites, they were on their way to the promised land, having just been delivered from the hand of Egypt by the mighty power of God. His awesome greatness had been manifested through the plagues upon the land of Egypt. The firstborn sons of the Israelites had been spared from death during the final of the ten judgments upon Egypt by applying the blood of the passover lamb to their doorposts. After this, God had miraculously opened the Red Sea to allow the passage of His people from danger into safety. With the memories of these history-making events fresh in their minds, God issued the Great Commandment and its explanation to them.

“That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee . . .”

Who is to keep these laws, statutes, and commandments? The next phrase explains:

“ . . . thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son . . . ”

Listed here are three generations. Does this mean these laws are to be taught for exactly three generations, and that the fourth generation should cease to teach them? No, of course not! The Hebrew parent knew this meant each consecutive son had a responsibility to learn, and each generation of parents and grandparents had a responsibility to teach. How long should each individual practice this principle?

“ . . . all the days of thy life . . . ”

What benefit would be derived from following this command?

“ . . . that thy days may be prolonged.”

Here is the key to long life: keep the principles of the Word of God. This is true both for the individual and for the nations, as verse three reveals.

“Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.”

For a nation to be great politically, culturally, economically, militarily, legally, and agriculturally, it must keep and obey the Word of God. These principles must be planted deep within the law and culture of a land for it to remain a great and prosperous nation. This is why America has been blessed in the past, and why it is slipping from greatness today. To the degree our nation obeys or ignores these commands, it will be blessed or judged of God. We must return to the Word of God and bring unscriptural practices to a halt. The Bible must once again become the sociological basis of our culture.

In verse five we find the Great Commandment.

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine
heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”*
(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

After the initial phrase commanding us to love God “. . . with all thine heart, . . . soul, and . . . might,” the Scripture continues, *“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.”*

The command is clear: we are to love the Lord with every part of our being. It is impossible to truly love someone until we know them. Everything we know about God comes primarily from the Bible. It is imperative, therefore, that we become intimately familiar with God’s Word, acquainting ourselves with our Father’s ways, His heart, His mind, and everything about Him. As we truly and deeply *know* Him, we will most certainly *love* Him.

How do we put God’s words into our hearts? We must begin by meeting Jesus Christ in a personal way, and then we must literally place the very Words of God, the Bible, into our hearts. We must study them, meditate upon them, memorize them, and apply them. May we say with the Psalmist, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:105). Note the great interconnection between loving God and hiding His Words in our hearts.

Now let us examine the following phrase of Scripture. *“ . . . AND THOU SHALT TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY UNTO THY CHILDREN...”* Everything is tied together here in a wonderful, life-changing—and even nation-changing—unity! The command is to love the Lord, the “how-to” is by putting His Word into our hearts, and the following phrases tell us exactly how we may instill these Godly values, lifestyles, and ideals into our children and our children’s children for generations to come.

“ . . . teach them diligently unto thy children” How are we to do this? The Scripture contains everything we need to know pertaining to Godliness and living a whole, full, and joyful life, and it certainly does not stop short on this, the most important of all

instructions. The very next phrase explains and illustrates how we are to go about teaching our children with all diligence.

“. . . and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up . . .”

In other words, whether we are at home or outside, whether it is morning or evening, whether we are working or resting, or whether we are doing any activity we could possibly imagine, *that* is when we are to be diligently teaching our children about the Lord and His great love!

“And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.”

In Biblical days, the Jewish men literally fulfilled this instruction by wearing phylacteries. The phylactery worn on the forehead was called a frontlet, being positioned between the eyebrows. It contained four portions of Scripture, including Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The men would thus be constantly reminded of God’s Word, and doubtless every time the children looked at their father, they would see the frontlet and be reminded as well. Another phylactery was worn on the left arm in a similar manner.

Just as the Jewish men kept God’s Word always before them, so should we keep His Word ever before us. It should be constantly leading and guiding us, even as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths. When we walk consistently in the ways of the Lord, our children will be always reminded that it is truly in God and His love that our paths in life are made bright. We must make His Word such a daily part of our lives that it is as if we had signs upon our hands and frontlets between our eyes.

The Great Sunday School Commission?

Many have called Deuteronomy 6:7 “The Great Sunday School Commission.” We certainly must take the Word of God and teach it to

our children in Sunday school. But, as we can see clearly from the above text, that is not exactly what God commanded us to do. In fact, it is not *nearly* what He commanded us to do! God never said He wanted this to be a “Sunday school commandment.” He did, however, show us that He wants this to be an “everyday commandment.” He wants it to pervade every sphere of our lives for every single day that we ever live. God commanded that He wants His Book, the Bible—the only Book ever written by God and the only book that will stand the test of eternity—to be that which we diligently teach our children not only on Sunday, but also on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. God has commanded us to teach this to our children pervasively and diligently!

On Sunday, we take our children and put them in front of Godly Christians, telling these teachers, “Be sure you give my children solid instruction honoring the Word of God. Be sure you diligently teach my children this Book so they will learn to hold it as a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their paths. Teach them that this Book will instruct them in the way wherein they should go, enabling them to live life to its fullest.” Is it not, then, truly amazing when on Monday it suddenly becomes okay for us to take those same precious children and put them in front of an un-Godly teacher in a school not even pretending to honor the Word of God? We place those children under instruction where the Bible is demeaned and where the very Word of God is surgically cut out and removed from everything they are taught at home and at church about life.

God has expressly taught us that we must never, never, never allow such a thing to happen. He has commanded us to *diligently* teach our children to love the Lord in every sphere of their lives, with all their hearts, all their souls, and all their minds. This is to be priority number one!

Start Early and Begin Simply

Now that we have established the absolute necessity of Godly instruction, the next logical thing is to ask, “When should this

instruction begin?” Should it start in kindergarten, elementary, junior high, or high school? God is faithful to answer this question as well. Isaiah 28:9 says,

*“Whom shall he teach **knowledge**? and whom shall he make to understand **doctrine**? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.”*

We are to begin teaching both knowledge and doctrine from the time the child is weaned. Just how old is that? It varies from child to child, but a good average might be at about one year old. So, from the time the child is about one year old, we should begin to expose him to and teach him about “knowledge” and “doctrine.” Knowledge refers to life in general, whereas doctrine has to do with the things of God. Now, this obviously does not mean we should hold a baby in our arms and quote Einstein’s theory of relativity or explain deep theological word studies from the Greek or Hebrew! What a ridiculous and funny sight that would be! The proper way to teach a child is described in the next verse, Isaiah 28:10, which tells us,

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”

We must begin guiding our children in the ways of Godliness unto life in a simple, repetitious manner. Begin with the very simple and eventually move to the more complex by building line upon line, precept upon precept.

Train Up a Child

Perhaps one of the most famous verses in the Bible regarding the raising of children is Proverbs 22:6, which states,

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

In finding the true meaning of this verse, it is important to realize a common misconception about it. No doubt, nearly every

pastor has had parents come to him with hearts broken over their wayward and hurting children. At times, they may say, “Pastor, please pray for my grown children. When they were little, we took them to church faithfully. Now they have gone off to college and have drifted away from the Lord. They’re sowing their wild oats right now, but I know they’re going to come back someday, just like the Bible says they will. Please pray for them until that happens.” One pastor’s response to such a statement was, “Of course I’ll pray for them, and I also want to see them when they are in town. However, exactly what Scripture are you referring to when you say that God said they would go away and then come back?” He was given Proverbs 22:6 as a response.

Well-meaning parents often quote Proverbs 22:6. Like many people, they may believe this verse means that if they take their children to church, although the children may go into a life of sin for a time, they will eventually come back to the Lord. However, that is not what this passage is teaching at all! In the Hebrew, this verse literally says, “. . . while he is growing old, he will not depart from it.” In English, that is the equivalent of the progressive tense, not the future tense! The concept is not that the child will depart and then come back at some future time. It is rather that he will not depart as he is continuously and progressively growing.

The Word of God is a book of promise, but it is also a book of commandment. It is imperative that we understand that this particular promise in Proverbs 22:6 is conditional. In other words, a certain condition must be met before this blessing will come to pass in the lives of our children. The condition is that we must *“train up a child in the way he should go”*

Touch the Palate

Consider what Solomon, the writer of Proverbs and the wisest man who ever lived, meant when he told parents to *“train up a child in the way he should go.”* Solomon took this phrase from a saying among the Hebrew mothers. *Train up a child* may literally be translated “touch the palate of a child.” God teaches us that if we

touch the palate of a child in the way he should go, then when he grows old he will never depart from that way.

Do you know where your palate is? The soft palate is the sensitive upper portion on the roof of the mouth that extends back to the uvula, which is the little piece hanging down at the entrance to the throat. Touching the palate causes a natural swallowing reaction. If you put your finger on your tongue and inch it back, you will know immediately when you have touched your soft palate. When a newborn babe is first brought to its mother and the mother gives her child its first milk, the milk touches the soft part of the palate and the child automatically swallows. It is this principle that Jewish mothers used in weaning their children.

At the time when the Bible was written, mothers did not have baby food companies to whom they could go as they began to wean their children. The mother would take a small bit of food, chew it herself, and put it on her finger. After that, she would get the baby to smile, put her finger on the palate, and the child would automatically swallow the food. She was thus developing in her child the hunger for the food that was on her finger. Before long, an interesting thing would begin to happen. All the mother would have to do was hold up that finger, and the child's mouth would open because the child had developed a hunger and a taste for the food on her finger.

Remember: Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that if you touch the palate of a child, when he grows old, then the hungers you have placed in him will stay with him throughout his life.

The first lesson a child learns in life is how to eat solid food. It is not how to change his diaper, make up his bed, or pick up his socks. It is how to swallow solid food. The principle is that from the very first lesson, the touching of the palate, parents should begin to train the child up in the way he should go. In other words, we must teach our children in the ways of God from the very beginning.

Cease to Hear the Instruction . . . !

Notice the phrase in Proverbs 22:6 that states, “. . . *in the way that he should go . . .*” That is inclusive of everything God has considered important enough to put in His Word. It *includes* all the commandments, statutes, and judgments of the Lord in both the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, according to Proverbs 19:27, it also *excludes* anything that is not consistent with God's Word.

“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”

Not only is the child to be taught all the principles of Scripture, but he is to be shielded from anything contrary to the way in which he should go. Does that mean we are to be careful that we do not have him exposed to just a little bit of humanism, just a little bit of evolutionary theory, and just a little bit of all the other multitudes of unscriptural concepts? Not even so our children will understand “what the world is like”? Yes, that is exactly what it means! Notice what the verse does *not* say. It does not say, “You would be better off not to listen to it,” or “I would not recommend that you listen to it.” It says, very clearly, “*Cease to hear it!*”

Going Back to Egypt Every Day

After God led the Israelites out of Egypt, opened the Red Sea, delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh, and then gave them the Great Commandment, do you suppose they got their children up every morning, washed their faces, fed them breakfast, got them dressed, put a sack lunch in their hands, and then sent them back down the path to Egypt for school? Of course not! Yet that is what so many parents do today!

Tragically, there are countless parents who love the Lord and believe His Word, yet every morning they get their children up and send them back into Egypt! These parents place their children in schools where their palates are touched daily by un-Godly people who develop un-Godly hungers in them. Unwarily, they send them into a

school system that has literally legislated God and the Bible completely out of it! It allows the children to see things they should never see and hear things they should never hear. God has so clearly commanded us to train our children diligently and daily in the principles of His Word, yet multitudes of Christian parents send their children every day into an educational system that directly opposes what He has commanded us to teach our children.

These parents are not acting out of rebellion. It is rather in ignorance that they do this. However, God is shaking the church in America today with the principles of His Word. *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent”* (Acts 17:30). The times of ignorance are a thing of the past. God has made known His will in this matter, and we will have to answer to a sovereign and holy God regarding the education of our children.

Combating a Philosophy of Exposure

A common reaction to the foregoing assertions might be, “We live in a day when a great education is a great exposure to all kinds of ideas!” However, the One Who created you, the One Who gives you life, the One Who says that you will someday stand in His presence, giving an account for every thought you have ever had, every word you have ever spoken, and every deed you have ever done, has commanded you to the contrary. The principle of separation from evil is repeated throughout the Bible. Romans 16:19 states,

“. . . I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.”

This straightforward statement should put to rest the foolish modern idea that we should teach children both good and evil, truth and error, right and wrong, and then let them make up their own minds as to which they prefer. Such a philosophy is humanism in its worst form. This idea first originated with Satan in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God knew we would be much better off without

knowing about evil in the first place! Satan, however, invented a lie that is still being perpetuated today, saying,

“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Satan twisted the truth, telling them that their eyes would be opened and they would be like gods. From that fateful day until now, the idea has been handed down that it is necessary to instruct our children both in the good and in the evil, and the results have been painfully obvious.

In order to combat this lie, we must remember and heed Romans 16:19. We must teach our children to be *“wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.”* We must protect our most precious possessions from the “garbage” that is destroying a generation. Just how much do you have to know about something to be “simple” regarding it? Absolutely nothing! That is what God’s Word is communicating to us: know nothing about evil. On the contrary, we are to train up our children in the way they *should* go, which is the way of righteousness, Godliness, and life.

The lie of the philosophy of exposure, however, has nonetheless been perpetuated in our nation as we have placed our trust in secular educators, who expose the children to all manner of un-Godly ideas. We must realize that a child’s mind does not have to be dragged through the gutter for him to be educated! In fact, education is of a much higher quality without exposure to evil. By following the humanistic philosophy of exposure, the public education system has left numerous children functionally illiterate. In addition, many more children are addicted to various substances, and literally millions are void of the solid Christian values that would enable them to live lives full of righteousness, peace, and joy. Government schools have nearly destroyed a generation by teaching contrary to Scripture. All the while, God is saying, *“. . . I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.”* In spite of the alarming state of our nation’s educational system, the philosophy of exposure continues to be widely used.

A pastor was shocked to see copies of textbooks from a junior high school in Largo County, Florida. They contained sentence after sentence of the lowest, four-letter gutter words that could be imagined. It was absolutely filthy. When asked what he had done with the materials, the pastor replied that he and thirteen other pastors had taken the textbooks to the local superintendent of schools. These men thought the superintendent would be shocked and would act immediately to have such offensive material removed from the classrooms. Instead, he responded, "Well, of course, how do you expect to educate children unless you expose them to the reality of life?"

That is not education! That is perversion, and that is how our nation came to be in the mess it is in today. "Knowing good *from* evil" is not the same thing as "knowing good *and* evil." By learning to be "*wise unto that which is good,*" we will automatically be able to detect that which is evil. It is not necessary to study evil in order to know what it is! How obvious it is that children do not need a course in the "art of effective sinning!" They will pick up more than enough of that without any help or training whatsoever.

A good illustration of this principle can be seen in how bankers are taught to detect counterfeit money. A teller was asked, "Did they send you to counterfeit money school? Did they show you all the different kinds of paper and ink that have been used in counterfeiting?"

She smiled, shaking her head from side to side. Then she replied, "No, none of those things. They showed us the special paper and ink used to make genuine money. All we were allowed to handle was the real thing. As a result, when counterfeit money comes across the gate, we can detect it instantly."

The same principle applies in education. Do not educate children by exposing them to evil; this only creates confusion in their minds. The evidence of more than fifty years of using the philosophy of exposure is seen in today's confused generation. Suicide is rampant, and children are killing other children. To many people, nothing is black and white anymore. There are just various shades of gray.

Exposure to evil has, in fact, created tremendous confusion in the minds of today's society.

When we are wise in good and simple in evil, God crushes Satan under our feet! This is promised in Romans 16:20.

“. . . I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet”

(Romans 16:20)

It is in the knowledge and obedience of the truth, of life, and of goodness that we overcome evil. When we expose our children to the life of God, they will be able to discern sin a mile away. Confusion naturally disappears, because "*. . . God is not the author of confusion, but of peace*" (I Corinthians 14:33).

Secular psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators continue to respond, however, that by protecting the child from un-Godly teachings, you will warp his personality. They may say, "He needs to know about these things so he will be well-rounded. Do you want to put him in a 'hot house'?"

A father recently looked for a Christian school in which to enroll his oldest daughter. Someone asked him, "You mean you want to put your daughter in a hot house?" He described how that sounded like such a terribly intimidating idea! He could just imagine his precious daughter, sitting there all day long, sweating and suffering. However, one day he asked a horticulturist how a hot house was used. The horticulturist explained that a hot house is the place where the best, most exclusive, valuable, and expensive plants are grown. Delicate, valuable plants are not put out on a hillside where they are exposed to damaging winds, rain, heat, and other harsh elements. They are treated special. They are put in hot houses where every element is carefully controlled for the good of the plant. They are placed in as near a perfect environment as possible.

How much more important it is, then, for children to be placed in the best possible environment, free from the damaging elements of

the philosophy of exposure! If we take care of special *plants* so carefully, how much more carefully should we treat our *children*?

Some parents say, “We are sending our children to the public schools to be missionaries.” The problem with this, however, is that these parents are sending their canaries to teach the sparrows how to sing, and their canaries wind up coming home chirping like the sparrows. We have nearly lost a generation by allowing the secular humanists perform for us the most vital task of educating and training our children! What our children hear preached at church on Sunday is being contradicted at school on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

When God told us in Proverbs 19:27 to cease hearing the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge, He used the imperative. The imperative form of a sentence is a command. It is not a suggestion. An excellent example of an imperative statement is when the drill instructor knocks on the door of the Marines in boot camp to wake them up. He does not gently tap on the door, saying, “Breakfast is ready. We have steaming hot pancakes and syrup waiting for you if you want it.” No, he kicks that door open and yells at the top of his voice, “Get out of those bunks! Get dressed! Five minutes to roll call. Get moving! Now!”

That is an imperative sentence. So is “*Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*” Another one? “*Train up a child in the way he should go.*” Still another one? “*Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen . . .*” (Jeremiah 10:2). That, incidentally, did not come from a Marine Corps drill instructor, a captain, a major, or even the President. That one came from the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! When an imperative comes from *Him*, we had better listen to it, and obey it, on the double!

Beware

The New Testament carries an awesome warning. Colossians 2:8 compels us to “*Beware.*” We need to understand that this word,

which was spoken by God through the apostle Paul, was an instruction that was rarely spoken. It was most often shouted.

As you drive through your town or city, you may come across a junkyard fence with a bold sign on it reading “Beware of dog.” This, too, is an imperative. It was never meant to be read and interpreted as, “Try to be careful so you do not hurt the cute little puppy in here.” No, it is a strong word of warning that something inside the fence is going to harm you beyond belief if you attempt to trespass on that property! If you are not careful, the dog inside the fence will literally destroy you.

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
(Colossians 2:8)

How can we be “spoiled”? It is not the same meaning as the “spoiled” quality of a rotten apple. It is rather the word used when a conqueror takes the spoils of war. It is used when that conqueror takes the most valuable possessions away from the vanquished people. Imagine that all the states around Texas became jealous of Texas’ oil and decided to take it for themselves. They would form an army, attack from every direction, and obtain the upper hand. They would then pump out all the oil, one of the most valuable products in Texas, and take it away for themselves. As ridiculous as this scenario seems, it is a picture of the meaning of the word “spoiled.”

What is the most valuable possession we have? Of what can we be spoiled? It is our children, our heritage. “*Beware lest any man spoil you . . .*” How can we be spoiled? By the taking away of our children “*. . . through philosophy and vain deceit . . .*,” which is humanism, or “*. . . after the tradition of men . . .*” like the theory of evolution.

Just an Innocent Theory?

Some may question, “Isn’t evolution just an innocent, harmless little theory?” Absolutely not! It is a lie. “Why?” you may ask.

“You’re being just a little bit ridiculous here,” some say. It is plainly understood from the Word of God and from the current state of the world that the theory of evolution is extremely damaging to children individually and to society as a whole. This is true for two reasons.

First of all, the theory of evolution denies the principle of the individual’s accountability to our Almighty and Holy God. It thus erodes the individual’s moral foundation. This destroys the child’s sense of responsibility to God, as well as the entire chain-of-command of God-given authority. Children may obey their parents “just because” when they are young. However, if they become teenagers and adults without first developing the foundation of accountability to a righteous God, they may begin to wonder *why* they should live moral and honest lives. Why not enjoy the temporary pleasures of drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex? Why not eat and drink and be merry for today, when tomorrow we die and there is nothing after that? We can clearly see the results of such a wicked and vain philosophy upon the culture and identity, or lack thereof, of people today.

Second, the theory of evolution totally removes the basis for self-worth in our children. Think of the staggering number of precious lives that have ended in our country through needless episodes of suicide, the millions of babies aborted before birth, and the dissatisfaction and low productivity on the part of those who live monotone lives without hope and peace! It is no wonder that these things occur, considering that our children are systematically taught that their very existence is merely a result of chance; that they are merely a by-product of evolutionary processes transpiring over billions of years!

Would you tend to believe there is a future of hope and purpose if you thought you were the descendant of a monkey, which was the descendant of an amoeba? This contradicts the beautiful and life-giving words that God Himself has spoken to us in the Genesis account of Creation—that man is created by a loving and holy God for a real and vibrant purpose! When we can see so clearly that our society is in desperate need of these words of hope and truth, how

can we consider sending our *own children* out to Egypt to be taught empty philosophies and vain deceit?

Many people today, it appears, think secular professors and doctors know more about educating children than does God! Many parents have become convinced that modern science and intellectualism require them to believe philosophies centered around secular humanism, such as the theory of evolution. “Philosophy” means “the love and study of the truth.” However, we must realize that some things the world proclaims as true are in fact false. We must stand upon what God Himself has proclaimed to be truth! God is truth, and in Him is no deceit. We can clearly see His truth through His Word, through His Creation, and through changed lives, as well as through excellent scientific studies that have been made regarding Creationism. It is of vital importance that we carefully seek out and ground ourselves upon the truth of God’s Word before we ever allow our most precious possessions, our children, to be taught things that could eventually contribute to their downfall!

Cast Off the Spiders!

Farmland often needs to be thoroughly cleared and mowed down before it is suitable for plowing, tilling, and sowing. The story is told of a young man whose job it was to drive tractors, mowing down the brush and weeds of idle farmland. One day, as he was accomplishing this task with the help of a massive brush-hog mower, the brush was so thick that the mower could not throw all of the cut waste from the back of the machine. As a result, debris started flying forward through the air, pelting his head and back. He took his blue jean jacket and lifted it up over his head to keep the debris from going down his back; then, after several hours, the landowner suddenly came running up, screaming, “Stop, Stop, STOP, STOP!!”

The young man put the tractor out of gear as fast as he could. He stopped, pulled back on the throttle, and yelled back, “What’s the matter? What’s the matter?”

“Look at your back!” the landowner screamed, with no small excitement.

Unbeknownst to the young man, he had been mowing over thousands of spider hills, tearing them up and chopping them to pieces. Spiders were flying everywhere. Hundreds of spiders had been thrown up from the machine onto his back, which had become a solid tapestry of creepy, crawly spiders, some as big as fifty cent pieces. As soon as he saw all those spiders, he threw his jacket off and started brushing himself like crazy. He wanted to get as far away from those spiders as possible.

In the same way, we must cease hearing wrong instruction and stop sending our children to be taught un-Godly principles and unsound philosophies. With the same motivation that the young man mowing the field had when he threw the spiders off his back, we must cast the spiders of un-Godly instruction out of our minds and lives. We must make a strong decision to cease, to stop, and to refuse these things. We must not allow the un-Godly people of this world to defile our children. We must not subject our children to these spiders! We must stop now! *“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction” “ . . . learn not the way of the heathen”*

God does not intend for His precious children, whom He entrusts to the care of their parents, to be subjected to the defilement of a Christless, Godless, non-Biblical education. He does not want us or our children to learn the way of the heathen.

Just a Bit Too Much?

Perhaps you may be thinking, “Yes, it is good to teach children about God and the Bible, but all this is a bit too much. I do not want people to think I am a fanatic or something.” However, when you stop and realize the current plight of our nation’s children and the dire straight of our public educational system, there can be no doubt that we must take drastic measures to correct these situations quickly. It is alarming to watch the daily news or read the newspaper and see what is happening to our most precious possessions—our most valuable resources—our children—our future! They are being overrun by drugs and alcohol, caught in the hopeless cycle of addictions, lost to depression and suicide, and even ruthlessly killed

by other children in our nation’s centers of education! Yes, something *drastic* must be done. Taking God’s Word and putting it into practice as it regards the education of our children is most certainly not “too much!”

It is the *living power of the Word of God*, which is the only true and lasting answer to the ills of our society. What a shame it is that so many Christians feel the need to apologize for the Bible! It is the true source of hope and light and it contains the very answer—the only answer that will bring true and lasting change for a lifetime and for eternity—and we must heed God’s Great Commandment to teach it to our children *with all diligence!* And, it is high time we put aside our hesitations and fears and plunge into a full Christian lifestyle, which is the only hope to save our children and ultimately our nation! Let us diligently obey God’s instructions in the Great Commandment. Let us boldly proclaim God’s truth. Let us save our children. This is *not* too much!

Think on These Things

As we throw out the negativism and hopelessness presented by secular humanism in our schools, we must ask ourselves what character values we are to replace them with. The answer is found in Philippians 4:8.

*“Finally, brethren,
whatsoever things are true,
whatsoever things are honest,
whatsoever things are just,
whatsoever things are pure,
whatsoever things are lovely,
whatsoever things are of good report;
if there be any virtue,
and if there be any praise,
think on these things.”*

Consider the list of virtues to which God would have us exposed: things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a

good report. Surely these are the things to which we want to expose our children! These qualities can develop character values in a nursery school, an elementary school, a junior high school, a high school, or even a college or graduate school. These are the qualities upon which we should think and focus our minds.

Evidence

Strong evidence supports the fact that providing a truly Christian education for our children is vitally important to developing men and women of Godly character who can make a positive impact upon society. Needless to say, the greatest evidence of all is the changed lives of countless students following the Lord and living to His glory! When we diligently teach our children God's ways, and not the ways of the world, they will not depart from Him.

Further evidence of the urgent need to provide Godly education for our children can be found from a variety of sources. In addition to daily television and newspaper reports, we can also get specific statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics. This organization has reported that, during the 1996-97 school year, more than half of the public schools reported at least one incident of crime. Crime, we must remember, is not talking too much or chewing bubblegum in class either! Ten percent of public schools reported at least one "serious violent crime" during the same school year. The definition of "serious violent crime" is given as "murder, rape or other type of sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon, or robbery."¹ Much more specifically, during that year, there were reports of 4,170 cases of rape or other sexual battery; 7,150 cases of robbery; 10,950 physical attacks or fights with weapons; 98,490 cases of vandalism; 115,500 incidents of theft or larceny; and 187,890 physical attacks or fights without weapons.²

¹U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97, Executive Summary," NCES 98-030, 1998.

²U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997.

On the other hand, many thousands of students across the nation are currently receiving a superb education in church and home schools using the Accelerated Christian Education® program. Students are graduating and going on to attend hundreds of colleges and universities in a variety of fields. They furthermore tend to receive high scores on achievement tests, performing very well at their respective universities. They exhibit high moral and ethical standards, many of them becoming Godly leaders in their communities and churches.

While the secular humanists look at our philosophy, exclaiming, "You will warp your children in a hot house!" we rest assured in both the promises of God and the proof before our eyes that training our children diligently in the Word of God is the way to go!

We do not have to apologize for the convictions and principles of Biblical education when they conflict with the philosophy of the humanistic educators. Our Christian young people have more character, more stamina, more creativity, and more initiative than their counterparts because they know right from wrong on the basis of having been trained in what is right. They will help make the "real" world what it ought to be, rather than conforming to its lack of character.

This type of information can be difficult for some people to accept. A young woman in England, who was about to graduate from college, wept for ten minutes upon hearing the message of the Great Commandment and Godly education. She said, "I know this is true, but it is contrary to everything I have ever been taught. Still, I know it is true." Numerous college graduates and teachers across the nation know it is true, but it tears them up inside when they read something like this booklet and have to face what they realize is a Scriptural truth. How tragic that our schools have come to this! However, let us not bemoan the past, but rather take up the torch of Biblical education from this time forth, reaching our nation's youth with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Give Your Children an Honorable Education

Oh, that we may obey the Word that God has spoken, not allowing this world to spoil our children by creating in them un-Godly desires that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. May we cease to hear instruction that causes us, or our children, to err from the words of knowledge. May we train up our children in the way they should go.

God the Creator has given us His manual for life. Just as every man-made object has a manual that tells how to get the optimum use out of it, so God has provided us with His manual for our lives, the Bible. Just as the watchmaker knows best how to fix the watch and keep it in excellent running condition, so God knows the most about and has the best plan for our lives. God knows more about how to educate children than all the Ph.D.s, all the university professors, and all of today's humanistic teachers put together. We must be sure to obey His plan, so that our children will have the best, most fruitful, productive, and fulfilling lives possible!

Some of you may be thinking, "I believe Biblical education is a good thing, but I just do not have the money to send my children to a Christian school." Be wise. Make sure your priorities are aligned with God's Word.

A father once commented that he wanted to send his fourteen-year-old daughter to a Christian school, but that he just could not afford it. However, at his house he had a Lincoln Continental he drove to work. Parked in front of that was a new Chevrolet Suburban that his wife drove to work. Beyond the driveway was a nice, three-bedroom brick veneer house with plush carpet and nice furniture. The backyard had a new fence around a newly installed swimming pool. He also had an RV with a boat and trailer he pulled to the lake on weekends. Interestingly, he was a leader in a fundamental, Bible-believing church, yet he did not feel he could afford to give his daughter a Biblical education.

The matter of proper priorities is illustrated by a single mother who put her boys in a Christian school. She worked in a bank and then came by after hours to help her boys clean up the school for tuition. She went out in the evenings and sold cosmetic products to put food on her family's table. She did these things so her three boys could have a Godly education.

The difference between the parents in these two illustrations is not a matter of finances. It is a matter of priorities. The man could easily have sent his fourteen-year-old daughter to a Christian school. The woman, on the other hand, in spite of her financial lack, trusted God's Word and God's ways, and was able to provide her three boys with a solid Biblical education as a foundation for their lives. We need to put our priorities straight! Our children are the most precious possessions in life. They have eternal destinies, and they are our greatest heritage. In view of this, *we can't afford not to give our children a Biblical education.*

The cost of not obeying the law of God is too high a price to pay. We simply cannot afford to disregard the instruction of the Word of God at the expense of our own children!

"Christian education doesn't cost; it pays." Dr. Bill Harvey was prompted by that statement to write a song with these words:



"Christian education doesn't cost, it pays;
Pays eternal dividends in so many ways.
Give a Christian education, surely you will find
Rewards for your investment in a Godly mind."

This is true. Christian education does not cost; it pays. It is not an alternative; it is not a luxury. It is not even just a good thing. It is part of the law of God. It is the law He commanded our forefathers, and it is the law He now commands us.

Conclusion

The training of a new generation of Godly, righteous young people is what Accelerated Christian Education® is all about. The Accelerated Christian Education program and curriculum is built upon the Word of God. Last year, thousands of students graduated from over 7,000 Christian schools using the A.C.E. program. Thousands more graduated from homeschools using the A.C.E. program. Each year, the number of graduates increases. Large numbers of these young graduates attend colleges and universities of every description. They tend to function in the upper portion of their classes, scoring high when compared with other students. After college, they go on to become outstanding men and women who make a difference in their families, churches, communities, and nation. Godly, Biblically based education works, and it works superbly!

The Bible teaches us that no man can mock God. What we sow is what we will reap. Therefore, please be careful—the greatest decision you as parents will ever make in the lives of your children is who you allow to reach their minds. Please help them by providing them with the one education that has been commanded by God. Teach the things of God diligently to your children.

When asked, “Jesus, what is the greatest commandment?” the Son of God said, *“Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* This is what He wants us to diligently teach to our children. It is His desire that we give our children a Bible-based, Christ-honoring education. For to love Him is the greatest commandment in all of life.

