

# Should You Be Homeschooling?

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In the past couple of decades, home schooling has risen from the ranks of being considered the bizarre behavior of an obscure group of fringe extremists to being one of the major trends of our society. And is it any wonder? By now, most of us are at least casually familiar with the frequent reports of poor academic performance by public school children. And who can miss the appalling headlines of shootings, drug trafficking, and seedy affairs between teachers and students?

Of course, we can attribute some of this to the sensationalism that is the stock-in-trade of a media driven by the increased advertising revenue that high ratings and circulation bring in. Nevertheless, even with that understanding, I think we would all agree that violence, drugs, and sex, as well as floundering educational standards, are problems in our schools. But are they reason enough for us to pull our children out of these cherished public institutions, away from their mentors and peers, and make an amateurish attempt to educate them in the isolation of our homes? If you are a parent or potential parent, should you consider teaching your own children?

I am not going to attempt to hide that I approach all such questions from the viewpoint of the Bible. You might be surprised to know that our sovereign, wise, and loving God has given us some very definite principles concerning the educating of our children. And, wherever you stand on the education issue, you might find yourself at least a little taken aback, if not downright shocked, to learn what these principles are.

## **Where Children Really Come From**

In considering this matter, let's ask a couple of questions that may seem to be absurdly simple: Whom do we want to educate? Of course, the answer is children. Next question: Who are children? Naturally, they are the offspring of their parents, and children and parents together make up a family unit. This is precisely what we find in the Bible.

In Genesis 1 and 2, we find that God created man (Genesis 1:26; 2:7), said that it was not good for the man to be alone (2:18), and created a woman (v. 22) to be the man's wife (v. 24). Notice that she became his wife, not casual live-in partner, and she was a she, not a

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he! This was the beginning of the family, though the family was not yet complete.

Skipping the account of the Fall in Genesis 3, we see in chapter 4 that Eve had children. This was in accord with God's command in Genesis 1:28 to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." It is a principle of biblical interpretation that the first place that something is mentioned in the Bible often tells us something significant about that thing. Genesis 4:1 tells us of the birth of the first child: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain." Notice what Eve says in response to this birth: "I have gotten a man from the Lord."

Think about what Eve said. Even though this verse clearly says that Adam and Eve had sexual relations and that this resulted in Eve becoming pregnant and giving birth to Cain, Eve says she has gotten a man "from the Lord." What can this mean? Simply this: Children are from God. We read of this in a number of places in the Bible, such as in Psalm 127:3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

Children are an inheritance or possession given by God. And to whom does He give them? Does He give them to the United Nations? Does He give them to the federal government? the state? the county? or the city? What about the local school board? No. God gives children to their parents. And this simple fact has some wide implications.

I must emphasize again that children are from God. Although they are the progeny of their parents, they are not merely that. They are gifts from God, and you can be sure that God does not give them carelessly. Naturally, He does not want parents to take lightly these gifts He has given them. Along with the gifts come responsibilities.

### **Parental Responsibility**

Abraham understood that his parental responsibilities included instruction. In Genesis 18:19, God says He knows Abraham "will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." In other words, God knew that Abraham would educate his family in the way of the Lord and charge them to live accordingly. God so approved of Abraham's instructing of his family that he took Abraham into His confidence about the action He was planning to take concerning the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The next few Scriptures we will examine contain directives from God concerning the instructing of children. In Exodus 10:1–2, we read that God told Moses that He had hardened Pharaoh’s heart so He could show His signs (the plagues) to Pharaoh and “that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord.” The word translated tell, as used here, means to give an accurate recounting of the facts. In Exodus 12:26–27 and 13:8, we find commands to the Israelites to instruct their children concerning the meaning of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Deuteronomy 4:9–10 contains the first connection of the word “teach” with “children” (as used of little children; there are earlier references to teaching the “children of Israel” as meaning the people of Israel): “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons; specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.” God wants the knowledge of Him, His law, and His works passed on to the next generation.

Now, this might still leave a couple of questions, such as: 1) who was to do the instructing? and, 2) was only religious instruction, and not secular instruction, in view here?

### **Who Was to Instruct?**

I’ll answer the first question in two parts. First, since God gives children as a heritage to their parents, it should be evident that, whoever does the actual instructing, the parents are responsible for the instruction. That is, the parents are responsible to make sure the instruction takes place, they are responsible for the content of the instruction (obviously God would not want children to be taught wrong things), and they are responsible to make sure the instruction is successful (the children learn).

Oddly enough, many parents seem not to recognize this connection between their children being given to them and their parental responsibility for their education. It seems that the existence of the

public school system over several generations has had the effect of making parents feel that the schools have the responsibility to educate their children. Yet most parents still realize that they are responsible to feed their children (though, with school breakfast and lunch programs, this too may disappear), and that responsibility rests on the same foundation as the responsibility to educate. God has made parents to be their children's caregivers.

Even the state, hypocritically enough, recognizes the first part of this parental responsibility—to make sure instruction takes place. If anyone is arrested when children are chronically truant, it is the parents, not the teachers. On the other hand, the state believes it is responsible for the actual instructing and for the content. But the dividing of these responsibilities between parents and schools makes it nearly impossible for parents to fulfill all of their God-given responsibilities. In other words, you may make sure that the child gets to school, and you may with considerable effort determine that the child is learning something, but you cannot monitor the appropriateness of all the instruction without sitting in on all of the classes.

The second part of my answer to the question, "Who was to do the instructing?" is answered in a Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:7–9. These verses state, "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." This is not a description of public school (or even of a church school). Giving instruction while sitting in one's house is home instruction being given by parents to their own children; i.e. it is home schooling.

Now another question might arise at this point concerning whether we can take the Old Testament as our guide on this matter. But first, let's answer the second question posed above, "Was only religious instruction, and not secular education, in view here?"

### **Only Religious Instruction?**

This is in reality a trick question because religious instruction and secular education cannot be separated. Take another look at Deuteronomy 6:7–9. The meaning should be unmistakable. God (through Moses) is telling the Israelites to teach their children about Him in everything they do, as expressed in walking, lying down, rising

up, writing His commands on their doorposts and even between their eyes. In other words, teaching their children about God should permeate everything they do.

If we are going to follow the principle given as an example for us in these verses, there can be no such thing as a secular education. The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety is God's Word that either states or implies all that is necessary for us to know concerning God's glory and man's salvation, faith, and life. For Christians, this should be their axiom or foundation of knowledge. Given this, the Bible must be the key textbook for every subject taught to the child of Christian parents.

Since a right understanding of God is to infiltrate everything a child is taught, no amount of after-school countermeasures will make up for the godless education a child receives in public school. There is no such thing as a neutral, secular education. Any education that does not put God at the forefront is anti-God.

Now, considering that you, the parent, are held responsible for whatever your child is taught, regardless of who does the teaching, and considering that God holds you responsible to rightly teach your child about Him as best you can according to your conscience, can you just glibly send your child off to school and believe this fulfills your responsibility? But, you may counter, don't I also have a responsibility to make sure my child is properly socialized?

### **Socialization**

The issue of socialization is often thrown in the face of home schoolers by the education establishment. It truly is an important matter, and God makes some very definite statements about it. But before I continue, I'll quickly answer the question about the validity of using the Old Testament.

The New Testament emphatically states, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Further, the New Testament tells us that the Old Testament gives us accounts of people's lives as an example for our learning (Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11), and that the Old Testament contains shadows or figures that are to point us to Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:5-6; 10:1). We, who now worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), should see how to apply this typology to our lives.

That said, let's notice a Scripture that might at first seem to have nothing to do with us, but in fact has much to do with this topic: "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch" (Deuteronomy 18:9-10).

As Christians, we should seek to understand the typology involved in these verses and to learn from it. Hebrews 3 and 4 tell us that the Israelites coming into the Promised Land is a figure of our entering into God's rest; that is, Christians coming into Christ (Matthew 11:28). What about the nations that God tells the Israelites not to follow? In the Old Testament, Israel was God's nation. Now, He is calling people from all nations into His holy nation, the church. The non-Israelite (or Gentile) nations in the Old Testament were a type both of sin (our own sins and those of others) and the sinful, non-Christian world.

The lesson for Christians, therefore, is that we should learn neither the way of sin nor the ways of this sinful, non-Christian world. I don't mean that, as we grow older, that we cannot educate ourselves to the world's godless argumentation so that we might better defend biblical truth against it. But we must not be taking in the world's practices and thoughts as if they are right.

If you send your children to public school, they will commonly receive instruction from teachers who belong to either apostate or heretical churches, practice some Eastern or pagan religion, or are atheists. Even if the teacher is a Christian, what the teacher is required to teach—and what children are required to know in tests—reflects the anti-Christian worldview that permeates public education. Now, do you think that your children can spend several hours a day hearing such instruction, using textbooks that deny God, and be surrounded by throngs of non-Christian children and not imbibe of the sinful ways of this world? Don't deceive yourself. Under such circumstances, anyone would find himself or herself imbibing to some extent, and children cannot help but take in large drafts of the world's thoughts. And you, who send your children to public school, are responsible for the intellectual and spiritual food and drink your children are swallowing.

The first part of Deuteronomy 18:10 says, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass

through the fire." In Old Testament times, the heathen nations would sacrifice their children to their gods by making them pass through a fire (see also Leviticus 18:21). God forbade His people from doing this. This is a type and a lesson for us under the New Covenant. We are not to follow the ways of the unbelievers who were willing to sacrifice their children to their false gods. When we send our children to be educated by the people of this world, we are sacrificing their minds to the values that these worldly people esteem and teach. We are, in essence, making our sons and daughters "to pass through the fire." As Christians, we can sacrifice our children's minds and spirits to this world's educational god by making them go to public school.

The answer to the socialization question is that parents are to have control over their children's socialization and not pass that responsibility onto godless teachers and children. Proverbs 22:15 tells us that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." If foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, the child is foolish. In fact, although it may seem awful to say it in so many words, children are fools. Anyone who has ever spanked a child knows that chastening may drive the foolishness far from the child, but only temporarily. Chastisement may, over the years, work a cumulative improvement, but children are by nature foolish. That's why they need us to instruct, guide, and protect them.

Now add this information to Proverbs 13:20: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." The "wisdom" of this world's education establishment says that children should be socialized by other children. But the Bible says that children are fools and that the companion of fools will be destroyed. Obviously, God's teaching on socialization does not agree with the opinions of the education experts.

And this matter of not socializing with fools applies to more than just one's classmates. Two Scriptures expose another category of fools in our educational institutions. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." And in Romans 1:21-22, we read, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Not only should we not allow teachers who deny God to teach our children, we should not even let our children associate with them, for they also, according to God's Word, are fools.

Who should socialize children? Their parents. Referring back to Deuteronomy 6:7–9, the everyday settings depicted imply that parental instruction is to be continual. This cannot happen if children are away from their parents. This does not mean that children can socialize with no one else. But they should be with their parents more than they are with others. And their parents should guide and supervise their children's other social contacts. The Scriptures that support this include, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.... My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path" (Proverbs 1:10, 15); "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (4:1, 14); "Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her [a morally loose woman], and come not nigh the door of her house" (5:7–8); "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father" (28:7). If you protest that these seem to be addressing only older teens or even young adults, my answer is that if parents are to socially guide even that age group, how much more younger children?

### **What About Christian Schools?**

But what about Christian schools? Certainly there may be extreme circumstances—such as when a single parent must work outside the home to earn the family's daily bread—when a child might need to be placed into a good Christian school. But, frankly, good Christian schools are rare. Many schools that call themselves Christian are merely near-clones of public schools. They are run by churches, but may use secular textbooks. Even those that use curricula from Christian publishers can fail to make biblical Christianity central to their teaching, and some even hire teachers from outside their church.

And, frankly, even Christian children in a school setting can make for a poor social environment. Although they may be receiving Christian instruction, they are still foolish children. All school settings have the twin dangers of teachers not teaching their subjects from a God-honoring point of view (even Christian teachers may have an erroneous view of God, and as the parent, you are responsible for what goes into your child's ear), and of poor socialization.

Personally, I would prefer that churches encourage and support home schooling for as many families for which it is possible. For those for whom it is impossible at the moment, the church should help to place

those children into small groups of home schoolers where they can receive an education as close to home schooling as possible. But the church should make every effort to help a single parent or a family in some unusual circumstance into a position where the parent or family can home school. Helping to pay for the startup of a home business, and whatever training may be needed, might be one way this could be done.

### **No Substitute for Direct Parental Instruction**

Nothing can really take the place of a child receiving instruction and socialization from his or her parents. Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers to "provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." God also speaks to the children, telling them to whom they should listen: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8). You might want to read Proverbs and find the many places where children are told to listen to their fathers and mothers. In Ephesians 6:1, Paul exhorts, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." God does not want us to place our children into a situation where they must choose between believing their parents or their teachers.

Sadly, it was God-fearing people who had not learned this lesson who started public school laws. The first such law in either Europe or the American colonies was passed in Massachusetts in 1647. It ordered every town having 50 or more householders to hire a teacher of reading and writing and every town of 100 or more householders to establish a grammar school good enough to prepare youths for the university. The law was dubbed the "Old Deluder Law." The motive behind it was to prevent "that old deluder, Satan" from holding people in ignorance of the Word of God by keeping the Scriptures in an unknown tongue. This was a reference to the state of the church before the Reformation when the Latin used by the Roman Catholic Church was not understood by most of the common people. The Reformation resulted in the Bible being printed in the common languages of the people. The Massachusetts law was written to help ensure that false teaching would never again deceive the people. The writers tried to make certain that the colonists would learn to read the Bible in their own language.

Good motive, wrong approach. Unfortunately, this law overlooked the fact that the Bible puts the education of children into the hands of their parents, not the government. Home schooling cultivates a decentralized, diversified education, so that the defection of a few

families away from the truth of God will have little impact on all society. But the centralized approach to education necessary for public education, even if begun by Christians, is dangerous because nothing guarantees that the government will remain in the hands of Christians. And, as we know, it did not.

### **There Can Be No Neutrality in Religion or Education**

To try to protect religious freedom, the framers of the Constitution attempted to make it religiously neutral. They did not really succeed because religious neutrality is not truly possible. Contrary to the official stance of neutrality or the myth that some Christians would like to promote that the United States is a Christian nation, the United States is really a humanistic nation. The Constitution recognizes no power higher than the people.

Our official stance of neutrality helps to preserve our religious freedom. But we must not think that there can be such a thing as true religious neutrality. To ignore God is to be against Him (Luke 11:23). It is inherent in man to always worship something, and if we are not worshipping the true God, we are worshipping a false god, even if that is man or his achievements, such as science. Hence, there can be no such thing as religious neutrality in education. This is why the government should never have become involved in education.

Education is inherently religious. For example, teaching children the Bible, or teaching them the Koran, or teaching them that life evolved from a primordial ooze are all religious teachings. Likewise, it is impossible to teach history from a stand that is neutral toward religion. What happens, for instance, when you get to the 30s AD? Do you ignore Jesus Christ? Do you present Him as a mere man. Do you mention that some people think He is God? All of these will present a religious point of view to the children listening. How can you present the rise of the Catholic church, the crusades, the Reformation, or the Puritans from a position that is neutral toward religion? It is impossible!

Similarly, to teach children "values education" is to teach them the tenets of a religion. Public schools teach children the religion called secular humanism. This religion so pervades the public education system that even Christian public school teachers who try to inject some Christianity into their teaching are still largely teaching secular humanism. It is the theme that pervades all public school textbooks and is the worldview promoted by the entire public school system.

Because of the public educational system, secular humanism has so saturated our society that most people have become so used to it that they can no longer recognize it. This is why some Christians, especially in small towns, will still insist that they can send their children to their public school because their school, they say, "is still good." This is a fatal mistake. The secular humanist worldview is inescapable in public education.

God gives no government—local, state, or national—the responsibility to educate our children. Government has taken that responsibility upon itself. The dangers inherent in government education escalate into a formula for national disaster when that government is humanist.

The real danger of sending our children to public school is not that they might be shot. Statistically, there is little danger of this. The real danger lies in their eating the fruits of an educational system that denies the true God and biblical authority and therefore produces children who shoot their classmates, deal in drugs, and consider sex outside of marriage perfectly acceptable behavior as long as one uses a condom. Our civilization turns its children over to people whom God defines as fools who teach them there is no God, that (contrary to Jesus Christ's prayer to His Father that "thy word is truth"—John 17:17) the Bible is not truth but is merely myth that only the superstitious believe, that truth comes from science, that the schools know better than their parents, that all we see around us is not the creation of an omnipotent God but the result of blind evolution, that humans are mere animals, that the aborting of human lives is perfectly acceptable, that man is really "good" and that "bad" people are only the result of a poor environment, and that there are no moral absolutes. And while these causes stare the public in the face, they blindly ask why all the violence, why the drugs, why the rising teen suicides, why the increasing incidence of children being admitted to emergency rooms for crisis psychological counseling?

God's curse is upon our public educational system. As Christian parents, we have a duty to remove our children from the public schools, not simply because the schools are failing academically or because our children are in some physical danger from violence or drugs, but because of the unquestionable danger that the humanist educational system poses to their minds. We must teach our children at home as God directs.