

An Ongoing Crying Need:

Educating Our Children for the Real World

By Paul G. Fleischer

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I. TAKE CARE OF THE LAMBS!

There are many things which call for our time and attention in the work of the Kingdom of God. Not the least of these is what we can and must do for the Christian education of our children and our young people. This is brought out by the words of Christ in John 21:15 and the following verses: *"Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep."*

This command comes from our Lord, who a number of times in His earthly ministry showed His love and concern for children in a special way. On a well-known occasion recorded in Mark 10, when some parents brought their children to Jesus for His blessing, the disciples rebuked those that brought them. They perhaps said things like "Don't you know the Lord is busy? He has come to this earth to build the Kingdom of God. Let Him get on with His work! Why bother Him with your little ones?"

Do we in our own way as individuals...or as a congregation...or as a church body...sometimes reflect this attitude of the disciples? Let there be no question about the fact that children and their Christian training are very dear to the Lord; therefore, children and Christian training must also be dear to those who serve Him. Jesus loves little children:

"And He took the children in His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:16

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:1-4

Our Savior-God is concerned about the proper training of children:

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." John 21:15

Jesus commanded our children to be brought to Him early in their lives.

But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." Mark 10:14

And that from childhood [infancy] you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. II Timothy 3:15

Our Lord God wants them to be trained thoroughly in His Word. We should teach God's Word diligently to our children:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Mat. 28:19-20

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. Psalm 111:10

Jesus earnestly warns against spiritual neglect:

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." Matthew 18:10

God promises to reward those who give children spiritual care:

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward. Matthew 10:42

When the Lord told Peter, *“Feed My lambs,”* He wished to remind him and us of the great care that is necessary for our children. The story is told of a pastor who was once visiting a sheep farm. It was towards evening, and the pastor was walking with the owner. Suddenly, threatening clouds and high winds began to appear, but before the owner and the pastor ran for shelter, the owner hurried back to call his older son and shouted, *“Take care of the lambs. There’s a storm coming!”* Similarly, consider carefully...when our Lord and Savior was soon to return to His throne on high – some of His last words with the disciples were, *“Take care of the lambs!”*

This concern of the Lord has behind it a realization of a child’s weak and helpless condition while attempting to survive in the *storm* of this ungodly world. The weakness and helplessness referred to is not only in the physical realm, but mainly in the spiritual realm. Children are by nature sinful and would be lost forever except when diligently cared for. Children dare not be left to choose for themselves what they want – whether deciding what is needed for their physical well-being or for their precious blood-bought souls. The Savior’s lambs need to be directed to and guided by the green pastures of God’s holy and saving Word. The Psalmist asks and answers: *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”* Psalm 119:9

II. TWO BASIC WORLD VIEWS

When the Lord speaks of feeding the lambs - even before feeding the sheep - we might conclude that He sees the future of His Church in the little ones. There is no greater heritage that one generation of Christians can leave for the next than the *Word of God* and the *pure Gospel of the Savior*.



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, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments. Psalm 78:5-7

There are only two basic world-views. One is a God-centered view of the meaning and purpose of life; the other is a creature-centered view.

1. *God-Centered View* refers to the meaning and purpose for life based on knowledge about God. God expects His people to pass on to future generations of Christians the view of life that teaches children to put their confidence in God. There is an ongoing crying need to demonstrate love for the Lord and consider what the congregation is doing to feed and properly care for the *lambs* of the Good Shepherd.
2. *Creature-Centered View* refers to *EVERYTHING* that exalts itself against the knowledge of God: all so-called science and all faulty human speculation, “wisdom,” and reasoning.

III. THE REAL WORLD AND REAL TRUTH

A Christian Day School provides the blessing of a formal education in school that supplements what the children learn by word and example at home and in church. It has sometimes been said that students in a Christian day school aren't prepared for the “real world.” It can often go like this: “There's a jungle out there; a world of struggle and survival – and young people need to be equipped to meet it. We want a school for our youngsters which prepares them for the real world.”

Of course, that's true! We do want our youngsters to be ready to live in the real world. But is the *real* world this present, evil and dying world?

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. I John 2:17

For the form of this world is passing away. I Corinthians 7:31b

With this perspective, it is plain that giving Christ's lambs an education aimed at preparing them only for this present world falls pitifully short of meeting their real needs. The real world is the world as God created it:

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Gen. 1:31

That one-time perfect world was lost due to the entrance of sin but will one day be restored:

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. II Peter 3:13

If education is preparation for life, and life is preparation for eternity, we will want schools for our children and young people equipped for a life that will prepare them for heaven. Education in time must be education for eternity if it is to be true education.

At the same time, it follows that a truthful education is grounded upon and governed by the Word of God. There is nothing else in this present fallen world that will survive in the *real* world.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. Matthew 24:35

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Psalm 119:89

If we want true education for the real world, we must base that education on the truths of Holy Scripture. Scripture alone can rightly answer the big questions in life: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?

The Savior prayed for His disciples young and old alike: *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”* John 17:17. Furthermore, Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate is the embodiment of all truth: *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* John 14:6

Since Jesus Christ is Himself the Truth, the foremost goal of all enduring education must be to bring children to know and believe on Him.

The goal of true Christian education is both to tear down and to build up. Everything that opposes the saving truth of God must be pulled down: perverse human “wisdom,” and so-called “science” with its theories have the negative potential to lead our young, immature and inexperienced blood-bought souls away from the Good Shepherd.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high

thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. II Corinthians 10:4-5

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men... Colossians 2:8

Even more importantly, Christian education builds up. It encourages our children - living in this real world - to develop a deep and mature relationship with their Savior Jesus Christ. This happens through God's Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But, speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. Ephesians 4:15

By the same token, God's Word gives ample warning against accepting or adopting human reason, science, or wisdom as a basis for *truth*. We are told to avoid profane and vain babblings, including the so-called "science" that denies the Word of our Creator God.

IV. THE JUNGLE OUT THERE

While this sinful world is not the environment that we desire for our children, it is the world in which we are living. Therefore, we must prepare our children to stand strong against the devil's soul-destroying efforts. Ever since the Garden of Eden, the devil and his allies haven't altered their purpose - which is to destroy God's kingdom, and all who belong to it.

Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. II Corinthians 4:4

There is no question about the fact that we are living here in enemy territory; the world itself is the field of the devil:

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. I John 5:19

The Word of God warns us about the corruption of this sinful world, and the danger of losing our true life in Christ for the sake of gaining the world:

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Matthew 16:26

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. I John 2:15-16

Don't be fooled – the devil's desire is to keep us what we are by nature - namely, the children of this hell-bent world! His plan is to fool us into believing that *this* is the real world. He wants us to be obsessed with a creature-centered worldview of life. His primary tactic is to try to turn our ears from God's Truth and control the educational mindset of future generations.

Since the devil is unalterably opposed to God's Truth, as the father of lies he seeks to blindfold people so that they become complacent, foolishly turning their ears away from truth while professing wisdom, and never coming to the knowledge of God's Word:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources for he is a liar and the father of it. John 8:44

Professing to be wise, they became fools. Romans 1:22

It is noteworthy that the initial Fall into sin came as a result of the devil's trying to control knowledge. He successfully tempted Eve with the lie that eating of the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* would make her as God. Whenever our public school promises knowledge that contradicts the Word of God, we know that the devil is using the same playbook. The public-school system can be one of the greatest influences in our world that turn our children away from God and His Truth.

When one of our children was attending second grade in the public school in Phoenix many years ago, he brought home and proudly displayed a penmanship paper graded "*good!*" Following the instructions of his teacher, he wrote in excellent penmanship, "We are an animal." As concerned parents there was some setting-things-right to do with our little son and with his teacher. When meeting with the teacher we expressed our unhappiness with the humanistic and evolutionary slant of the sentence. The teacher quite casually dismissed our concerns by saying something to the effect that we were over-

reacting; there was nothing meant by it; and that she was just teaching handwriting.

This teacher was, perhaps unwittingly, an instrument of the god of this world who uses every avenue open to him to undermine real truth. In the last analysis, what does it profit a child if he reads quite well and writes with flawless penmanship but eventually loses his own soul because he is taught to believe and live according to a principle that he is - in fact - no different from an animal?

The creature-centered philosophy of humanism is the *religion* of the public schools. Soul-destroying secular humanism (as opposed to God and Christ-centered Christian education) pervades public school education in our day. Included among its basic tenets are these:

1. Man is supreme – there is no higher power.
2. Man evolved from lower forms of life – there was no creation.
3. Man is inherently good (but corrupted by evil social institutions and a bad environment). There is no such thing as inherited or original sin.
4. Man is an animal – not essentially different from the rest of the creature world (this betrays a blindness to the fact that man was created in the image of God).
5. There are no objective moral standards or absolutes – the standard is what is commonly accepted out in the world, not what is recorded in God’s Holy Word.

Where such a philosophy reigns, such seeds produce bitter fruit. Among the fruits of humanism are other *ism’s* such as *materialism* (trust in and dependence on possessions); hedonism (living for pleasure); and *narcissism* (me first – self worship). Surely other *ism’s* might be added to this list.

Such is the environment in which parents are called upon to raise their children for Christ! Fostered by secular humanism and its resulting fruits, it is truly a *jungle* out there. The jungle of our modern American society is a refuge for crime and corruption of all kinds, including the monsters of abortion, substance abuse, the breakdown of the family by divorce, an unholy redefinition of marriage, the mainstreaming of sinful sexual behavior, and a host of other evils.

We and our children are indeed involved in a war of struggle and survival. When even mature Christians are tempted to adopt, or at least to casually accept life in such a Satanic jungle, what about our children? If it is true that "children are like wet cement, easily impressionable," what impressions are left on them as they are exposed to these forces of evil?

The question cries out for an answer: What can we as concerned parents, as concerned Christians, as a concerned church and church body, do to help our children survive in such a jungle? How best can we meet the challenge incumbent upon us to raise the next generation for a God and Christ-centered view of life? We must do all we can to provide them with a truly Christian education and worldview at home, in church, and in school!

If they are rightly sensitive to the many and subtle influences of the ungodly world, parents who have a Christian school available for their children will think it over a hundred times before deciding that they want their children to be prepared for the *real* world by having them *dive in* and experience the public-school system. (We know that not all of our Christian parents have Christian day schools to which to send their children. Some have made the brave choice to home-school their children. Some find themselves with no viable option except to enroll them in the public school, that is, on the elementary level. Immanuel Lutheran High School in Mankato, MN, and Eau Claire, WI, and Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire are available for all our young people.)

If, in fact, our Christian schools do shelter our children from the evil world in which we live, is that bad? Consider the example of the parents of Moses:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. Hebrews 11:23

These simple words tell us our duty. Christian parent, hide your child! And where? Oh, hide him in the safest refuge, the shadow of the Almighty...in the truth of His Word. The education Moses' mother gave her son during the years of his childhood was such that all the years of training in Pharaoh's court could not undo it. His parents' faith bore fruit in his own faith when he, at every cost, chose suffering with the people

of God and was not afraid of the wrath of the king. Moses saw Him who is invisible. Train the child for God and his people, and when the time comes that he must go out into the world he will be safe in the power of faith and of God's keeping. "God grant that the Church may indeed become a 'Moses' mother,' the faithful nurse of the children He entrusts to her care, 'hiding' them and keeping them separate from the world and its influence." ("How to Raise Your Children for Christ" by A. Murray)

V. IN HOME, CHURCH, and SCHOOL

There is no question that the ongoing, crying need for training and educating the next generation for Christ begins in the home. The actual mention of teaching in any form in the Scriptures is in connection with the home. In Genesis 18:19, speaking of Abraham, God said, "*For I know him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice.*"

The fact that teaching is to be centered in the home, and also that its primary function is to instill spiritual values, is laid before us also in classic Scripture passages on Christian educational methodology, such as:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up... Deuteronomy 6:6ff

And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...2 Timothy 3:15ff

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

The Lutheran Church has, from its very beginning, been an outspoken supporter of the God-centered view of life through Christ-centered schooling. The Preface to the *Lutheran Book of Concord* includes the words *our churches and schools* no less than ten times. So, it is clear that our Lutheran forefathers recognized that the church has a vital role to play in providing Bible-based schooling where Christianity is both "taught and caught" by the students.

At this point it would not hurt us to review some of what Dr. Martin Luther had to say on the subject. He said: "We see how the schools are deteriorating throughout Germany. This could not continue for the right of instruction of youth is a matter in which Christ and all the world are concerned." Luther gave three reasons for supporting schools:

- 1) In this work we are fighting against the devil, the most artful and dangerous enemy of men.
- 2) We should not receive the grace of God in vain, and neglect the present favorable time.
- 3) God's command, which through Moses so often urges and enjoins that parents instruct their children.

Over all of Luther's writings on education stands his central theme: Education must be Christ-centered! "Where the Holy Scriptures do not rule, there I advise no one to send his son" And again: "Above all, in schools of all kinds the chief and common lesson should be the Scriptures." Clearly, Luther was determined that we must have schools, Christian schools. If he was so convinced of this in his day, what would he have to say on this subject if he were living in these latter days?

VI. IN CONCLUSION: SOBERING THOUGHTS

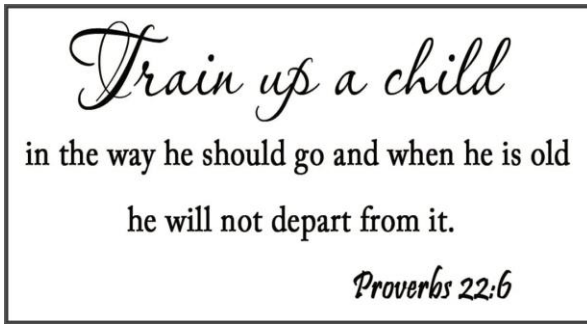
With all that has been said, we hope we have helped to instill a heightened awareness of the truth expressed in the words: "The Church which is not concerned for the Christian education of its children, need not worry about the future, for it has none."

These days, from many quarters in our church body, we are hearing concerns expressed about the future of the CLC relevant to Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary. ILC's Board of Regents recently circulated our pastorate seeking the whole-hearted cooperation of all in promoting enrollment at our Eau Claire school. Where would the CLC be without ILC? What shall become of the CLC if ILC has to close its doors?"

The contents of this essay do not give much by way of a practical solution to the problems we face in regard to continuing to operate and maintain ILC. Hopefully, however, a foundation has been laid that might serve as a springboard for a soul-searching and profitable discussion

regarding the vital role ILC has in our destiny as a church body in the history of this world. For indeed, if we do not attend with undying urgency to the Christian training of the next generation, the days of our church body are numbered. And what is more, the eternal salvation of precious blood-bought souls is at stake.

Educating the next generation for God's real world, for eternity, remains an on-going, crying need so long as we live in the "enemy territory" that is this sin-sick, dying world. We must firmly maintain the biblical doctrine of education--that the only real and true education begins with thorough instruction in God's Word. Whether in chemistry or sociology, history or biology, music or literature, or whatever the course of study, everything should be understood and taught in the framework of God's perfect creation, the universal effects of sin and its curse, and the saving work of Christ.



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