

What About Christian Schools?

As a father who has increasingly come to believe that home education is the best method of raising children, I am very interested in the reasoning of those who support public schooling or private Christian education.

Recently I saw a book called *The Christian School*, by Noel Weeks, and I bought it in order to find out the biblical basis for sending children to Christian schools. What I found was some great reasons for home education!

In his first chapter, entitled "Why Schooling?", the author raises the question of the basis for Christian schools. He begins with this statement: "Part of the problem is that the Bible does not mention schools. Hence Christians have a tendency to accept what is believed and practiced in the society around them." This is true.

He continues: "In both the Old Testament and the New Testament the responsibility for the training of children is placed upon the parents." Support is offered from Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and Ephesians 6:4, and additional Scripture is presented to demonstrate the nature of the training parents are supposed to give their children. Among other things, it is to be "comprehensive in its scope," meaning that it must be carried on "all the time. There is no part of the day's activities upon which the truth of God does not impinge."

What about the role of the church in education? The author acknowledges the church's educational role since the children are part of the congregation, but he again affirms, "Whenever Scripture singles out people as responsible for the training of children it places that responsibility upon the parents." Again, "...when both Testaments deal specifically with the training of children, then they give the parents that task."

In a section with the heading "The Bible and Schools" Mr. Weeks discusses various arguments that are sometimes heard as to whether there were schools in biblical times and how that may impinge on God's direction for us today. The bottom line, he concludes, is that we cannot use the possible existence of something the Bible does not even mention to put aside what the Bible clearly sets before us. "Hence we have to try to work out the implications of what we actually find in Scripture."

This brings him to consider home education. "Obviously those who argue that parents should educate their own children are trying to take seriously the biblical teaching." He even sets aside the arguments of those who do not believe parents can do the job.

"We must not use our supposed incompetence or lack of time as an excuse for disobedience to a biblical command. If we have problems and difficulties in obeying the commandment, then we should seek

ways to overcome them. Our responsibilities as parents cannot be simply brushed aside.”

He even dismisses the broad assertion of some that parents are simply not competent to teach in a day of expanding knowledge. Rather, he writes, “Some educators have built a mystique around education to justify their own employment to train teachers.” His conclusion: “...then we would say that most parents could teach their children. They may have to do a little study themselves but they could do it.”

By now as I read this I am asking myself: What basis then is there for promoting schooling instead of home education? He has, in effect, proven an able apologist for homeschooling. So I read on.

As to the obstacles to home education:

The greater problem is time. This problem particularly concerns fathers. For while Scripture does refer to the role of both parents in training the child (Prov. 1:8) there is a definite tendency to place particular responsibility on the father (e.g. Eph. 6:4). We might wish for a return to a situation in which small farming or cottage industry gave men time to be with their families while working and considerable flexibility in their hours of work. Though it may seem like an impossible dream, we as Christians need to think and work towards a work style that is more conducive to family life.

However, in the interim, we must find a way of reconciling our need to work to support our families and our need to train our children comprehensively in the ways of the Lord. Mothers can fill some of that gap but they will not fill all of it.

When we as Christians have difficulty in meeting our responsibilities we naturally turn to our fellow believers for help.

This is the point at which he introduces the need for Christian schools. They are a means of parents helping each other to fulfill their responsibilities, though he admits that “most Christian schools do not meet this ideal. There is a strong tendency for them to ape the state schools in which the parents effectively hand over the children to the ‘expert’ teacher and have no say or role in education.”

Did you follow the reasoning? Fathers are busy supporting the family and mothers cannot do the job by themselves, so we need Christian schools, even though most of them reinforce the tendency of parents to abdicate their responsibilities.

But all his own arguments, including his final appeal for working toward patterns that are more conducive to family life, should lead to another conclusion: we should make whatever sacrifice necessary to do what God has called us as parents to do. We cannot just “brush aside” the responsibility

Scripture gives us. Again, "If we have problems and difficulties in obeying the commandment, then we should seek ways to overcome them." We cannot allow a "lack of time as an excuse for disobedience to a biblical command." Yes, exactly!

Christian schools are a commendable alternative to the degenerate state schools, but they are not (even according to this advocate of them) the ideal. Fathers should seek to overcome whatever impediments keep them from training their own children. God's ordained educational institution is the family.
