



the role of parents in

EDUCATING

OUR CHILDREN

May 20, 2023 | Steve Heitland

*Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.
He established a testimony in Jacob
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children,
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
and that they should not be like their fathers,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

—Psalm 78:1-8

20 THESES ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Prolegomena

Purpose

 Main Session

 Breakouts

History

 Christians and schools

 Literacy

Options

 Homeschooling

 Christian school

 Government (public) school

School choice in the church

 Fellowship and sharpening

 The conscience—not private, but informed

 Providential circumstances—parent(s); resources; child(ren); season of life

 True grace

My educational biography

Definition

We are seeking to answer this question as Christians:

What is education?

Education—*the lifelong pursuit and acquisition of knowledge about God and his world under his authority and for his glory.*

 Lifelong

 Pursuit and acquisition

 Knowledge

 God

 His world

 His authority

 His glory

The Theses

Thesis 1: Your children are created in the image of God and are, therefore, responsible to know, love, and obey him.

Genesis 1:26–27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Exodus 20:2–6 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Mark 12:29–31 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

John 14:15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Thesis 2: Your children have been given to you, their parents, as a gift from God. They are given for his purposes.

Psalms 127:3–5 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Malachi 2:14–15 But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is

your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

Acts 17:26–27 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

Thesis 3: One of the primary responsibilities of parents is to train their child(ren) to know, love, and obey the Lord. Education is both *caught* and *taught*, and especially as regards what we *love*.

Deuteronomy 6:4–9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Thesis 4: Children have a God-given disposition to trust and follow their parents' example. This is part of God's good design for the world.

Exodus 13:14 And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.'

Deuteronomy 6:20 When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?"

Proverbs 23:26 My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

Thesis 5: *Education, therefore, is most fundamentally a responsibility of parents.* Other educators and institutions may be involved, but parents always bear primary responsibility before the Lord. This is inescapable, and it is good.

Exodus 10:2 ...and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.”

Deuteronomy 4:9 “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children...”

Deuteronomy 11:18–19 You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Proverbs 1:8–9 Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

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

1 Timothy 3:4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive...

Titus 1:6 ...if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

Thesis 6: Parental abdication of the responsibility *to educate our children in every way* is a recipe for disaster, as both experience and Scripture show.

1 Samuel 2:12ff The story of Eli and his worthless, faithless sons, Hophni and Phineas. The Lord strikes them dead for their blasphemy, and ends the line of Eli.

1 Kings 1:5-6 Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom.

2 Timothy 3:1–5 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Hebrews 12:7–8 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Thesis 7: Because of the fall, all of the responsibilities above have been made more difficult. The primary obstacle we face is the sinful hearts of our children and ourselves.

Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Romans 7:15–21 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh...For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

Thesis 8: Other sinners, including teachers and peers, are also an obstacle—and some moreso than others. There is no sin-free person or institution available to us by which to educate our children.

Nahum 1:2 The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

1 Corinthians 2:14–15 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Thesis 9: The devil works relentlessly to reinterpret reality in a manner that either directly, or subtly, distorts who God is and what that means for us.

Genesis 3:1–7 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ...But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will

be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

1 Kings 12:26-30 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one.

Thesis 10: True education, therefore, is an undoing of the curse. It is an important means of reorienting the heart of fallen man to the truth as God has revealed it.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Corinthians 10:4–6 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

John Milton “The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him...”¹

Thesis 11: True education gladly recognizes and affirms the authority and priority of God—especially in his word—in assigning meaning to all things.

Psalms 19:7–11 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

¹ John Milton. *Areopagitica and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2014, 86.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Matthew 5:21–22 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

Thesis 12: True education loves and pursues the glory of God.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Isaiah 48:11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

Acts 12:21–24 On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!” Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. But the word of God increased and multiplied.

1 Corinthians 10:31; 11:1 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God...Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

Thesis 13: True education includes loving God with our minds, as the truth revealed to us in God’s word increasingly informs and controls our understanding and interpretations of life.

Matthew 22:37 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your...mind...”

2 Corinthians 10:4–6 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Augustine true virtue = *ordo amoris*, rightly-ordered loves. “Every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it.”²

² The quote is from Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 16. “We must, in fact, observe the right order even in our love for the very love with which we love what is deserving of love, so that there may be in us the virtue which is the condition of the good life. Hence, as it seems to me, a brief and true definition of

Thesis 14: The home has always been—and will always be—the center of education for children. This does not mean that all education must occur at home; but that the home is the largest influence on the child and is rightly viewed as the center and hub of all true education.

Deuteronomy 6:5–7 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Proverbs 1-9 The role of fathers, especially; and also mothers (see the “Navigating Life Wisely” sermon series).

Titus 2:3–5 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Thesis 15: One of the primary ways that sin operates in all education—and especially in government education—is in unacknowledged presuppositions. Often, the most potent idols are the ones you don’t even recognize. *There is no neutrality* (which does not mean there is no common ground).

Deuteronomy 30:15–20 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Psalms 135:15–18 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them.

virtue is ‘rightly ordered love’.” *City of God*. Trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xv: 22.

Douglas Wilson “Education is a completely religious endeavor. It is impossible to impart knowledge to students without building on religious presuppositions....This is because all the fundamental questions of education require religious answers.”³

CS Lewis “...a boy who thinks he is ‘doing’ his ‘English prep’ and has no notion that ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake. It is not a theory they put into his mind, but an assumption, which ten years hence, its origin forgotten and its presence unconscious, will condition him to take one side in a controversy which he has never recognized as a controversy at all.”⁴

CS Lewis “An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy. If a man’s mind is open on these things, let his mouth at least be shut.”⁵

Thesis 16: Government schools have—especially and increasingly over the past 50+ years—been captured by godless philosophies, which are actually religious: egalitarianism and feminism, materialism, environmentalism, critical theories, pluralism and relativism, humanism. These schools are increasingly viewed and utilized by our elites to indoctrinate our children in values that are opposed to God—often under the guise of ‘neutrality’.

Egalitarianism

Feminism

Materialism

Sexual Identity

Self-creation

Environmentalism

Evolution

*Critical Theories*⁶ (*weak god/ strong god*)

³ Douglas Wilson. *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2022, 62.

⁴ CS Lewis. *The Abolition of Man*. New York: HarperOne, 2016, 5.

⁵ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 48.

⁶ See James Lindsey, *The Marxification of Education: Paulo Freire’s Critical Marxism and the Theft of Education* (Orlando, FL: New Discourses, 2022), for analysis of these phenomena. Lindsey is an atheist, and his

DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [or Belonging])

SEL (Social-Emotional Learning)

Pluralism

Relativism

Humanism

Man as the measure

The problem of abuse in government schools⁷

Thesis 17: Therefore, government schools are the least-desirable option for Christians.

Equal Opportunity Offense (LCD theology in Christian schools)

Anchor

Dayspring

LCCS

Thesis 18: Christian parents must carefully consider our responsibilities in educating our children in light of the above, and how we spend our time and money should reflect the Lord's views of our priorities.

Matthew 12:35–37 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

analyses and conclusions are colored by those biases; but he is generally quite thorough and fair and documents what he discloses.

⁷ The well-known *Houston Chronicle* report on abuse in the SBC found more than 700 alleged victims over 21 years, among the SBC's approximately 47,000 churches. By way of comparison, a recent Department of Education report has found over 15,000 cases *annually* (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/sexual-violence.pdf>) among the roughly 99,000 public schools in the US (<https://nces.ed.gov/FastFacts/display.asp?id=84>). Total enrollment at public schools is roughly 55 million (<https://nces.ed.gov/FastFacts/display.asp?id=65>), while the SBC claims roughly 15 million members (<http://www.bpnews.net/52962/sbc-giving-increases-while-baptisms-continue-decline>).

Hebrews 4:13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Thesis 19: Fear and unbelief are sinful motivations in all endeavors—including (and perhaps especially) in the education of our children.

Romans 14:23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Thesis 20: Faith-filled and faith-full parenting that raises our children to know and love the Lord is one of the great joys in this life.

Proverbs 10:1 A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

Proverbs 17:21 He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.

3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Notes

[illegible]

[illegible]

Educational Options

Besides traditional public schools, here are some options in our area:

Abeka. (www.abeka.com). Supplier of homeschool curricula for over 50 years.

Agora Cyber Charter School (agora.org) and **PA Virtual**. (www.pavcsk12.org). Online charter public schools. Free to PA residents, with computers and other educational materials provided. Follows a public school (K12) curriculum.

Anchor Christian Academy. (www.anchorchristianacademy.org). Local, nondenominational Christian school. Uses the University Model, with 2-3 “central days” in the school classroom, and 2-3 “satellite days” in the home classroom, thus collaborating with parents to educate their children. Their aim is to “graduate servant leaders who love God, His Word, and lifelong learning.” Grades 7th through 12th.

Canon Press. (canonpress.com). Supplier of curricula for classical Christian education, including for homeschoolers and for Logos Online School (logospressonline.com).

Dayspring Christian Academy. (www.dayspringchristian.com). Local, in-person, nondenominational Christian school. Uses the Principle Approach, which “focuses on consistent and ordered teaching and learning. The goal is to build a student’s Christian character and sense of self-government, Christian scholarship, and Biblical reasoning for lifelong learning and discipleship.” Grades preschool through 12th.

Lancaster Country Christian School. (www.lccs.cc). Local, in-person, nondenominational Christian school. “LCCS aims to graduate students who Love God, Love learning, Love goodness, and Love others.” Grades preschool through 12th.

Liberty University Online Academy. (<https://www.liberty.edu/online-academy/>). “LUOA is a K-12 school that exists as a department of Liberty University. LUOA seeks to provide support to parents/guardians in their biblical responsibility to train their children to become Christ-centered men and women with the values, knowledge, and skills essential to impact the world.”

Logos Online School. (logosonlineschool.com). An online, classical Christian school for over 40 years. “Logos Online School exists to support parents in their biblical responsibility to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. To this end, we provide a Christ-centered classical education for grades 7 through 12 that is convenient, affordable, and accredited.”

Veritas Academy. (www.veritasacademy.com). Local, in-person, classical Christian school. Their mission is “to cultivate loving, serving, thinking students through classical Christian education.” Grades preschool through 12th.

Resources for Further Study

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- P. Jesse Rine. "Christian Higher Ed for a New Era." *American Reformer*. April 28, 2023. <https://americanreformer.org/2023/04/christian-higher-ed-for-a-new-era/>.
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- Scott Yenor. "Anatomy of a Cancellation." *First Things*. January 2023. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2023/01/anatomy-of-a-cancellation>.
- . "Are There Trustworthy Protestant Universities?" *American Reformer*. April 4, 2023. <https://americanreformer.org/2023/04/are-there-trustworthy-protestant-universities/>.
- . "Higher Ed Reform in Red States" *American Reformer*. January 17, 2023. <https://americanreformer.org/2023/01/higher-ed-reform/>.
- . "Maintaining a Canon in Woke Times." *The American Conservative*. May 9, 2023. <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/maintaining-a-canon-in-woke-times/>