

Small Groups – Educating Ourselves and Children

By Pastor Richard Braun

Date _____

Week _____

Mood Meter

What's happening this week? Let's talk about fears concerning education. Do you have any recurring fears about learning? What are they, and from where do they come?

Opening Prayer

Gracious Father, we come before you with many things on our minds. At times we feel at loose ends, and at other times we feel powerful, even without fear. Today we will talk about education, learning, and what lessons we may find in your Word. Fill us with anticipation, clear our minds, and allow us to be attentive to your word and your Holy Spirit's influence as we share and get to know each other more deeply. Amen.

Open It

1. What do you think of when someone says he/she is well educated? Please list an example and why you believe as you do.
2. If you have children, how do you try to better educate them beyond making sure they get to school each day? How do you educate yourself outside or beyond the organized go-to-school educational process?
3. How do you see education influencing society today? What are we failing to understand about the connection or lack thereof between education and a well-functioning society?
4. Do you understand the concept of the four levels of learning? A- I don't know what I don't know. B- I know what I don't know. C- I know what I know. D- I don't know what I know. Describe the levels and how you've experienced them thus far in life. Try to give an example of each level for you. It could be a sport, a technical subject, politics, or any area of expertise for you.

Scripture to Consider

In Romans, chapter eleven, Paul talks about God's "wisdom and knowledge" and how difficult it is even to understand it. He then says we "need to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice" acceptable to God. Our thinking about God needs to be deeper – Paul says this in [Romans 12:2](#) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."¹

The biblical implications here seem pretty straightforward. It's essential not to be "of the world" but still be in the world. Perhaps our mind needs to be stretched a little to understand the impact God can have and will have on our lives if we allow that transformation of mind to take place. Gaining God's "wisdom and knowledge" is a crucial skill we need to cultivate or learn.

Proverbs is a book of wisdom, which often gives us wise counsel on many topics. Two examples: [Proverbs 1:8](#) Hear, my son, your father's instruction, And do not forsake your mother's teaching;²

¹ *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

Proverbs 15:2 'The wise person makes learning a joy; fools spout only foolishness.'

Figure out how to make learning a joy, and you can become wise.

Jesus was very active in teaching and educating his disciples and all the people around him; at least 20 passages in Matthew alone deal with Jesus as a teacher. Here is one - Matthew 4:23 **And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.**³ What was Jesus famous or noted for during his ministry? A **teacher**.

This passage from Mark 1:29 concerns Jesus and his disciples, "They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach."²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."⁴ Again, time after time, people talked about Jesus as a wise teacher who taught with authority.

Explore It

1. Paul was the most prolific writer of New Testament letters. Paul did lots of teaching himself while going on two major missionary journeys. What is significant about Paul's challenge to us to transform our minds so we can better understand the will of God?
2. In your mind, from where does a proper attitude toward learning come? As a parent, teacher, manager, or inspired worker, how do you interest someone in wanting to learn?
3. Jesus was fully man, but he certainly was also fully God. If you can, describe how this might have influenced his teaching ability.
4. Education in the United States certainly affects a person's way of life at this point in history. Did education similarly affect earlier societies? How might we explain the relationship between education and a person's status in life?

Apply It

1. Regarding politics, how can you take what you learned in this study to understand a politician's position on education better? How much difference do you see? Explain those differences as you understand them.
2. What will you do differently, if anything, in helping your children embrace learning with more gusto? If you don't have children explain how this study may influence you regarding educating yourself. If nothing has changed for you, explain why it may not have changed.

² *New American Standard Bible*. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Pr 1:8). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

^a Mark 1:39; Luke 4:14, 44

^b Matt. 9:35; 13:54; Mark 1:21; 6:2; 10:1; Luke 4:15; 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20

^c Matt. 3:2; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 20:25; 28:31

³ *New American Standard Bible*. 1986; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996 (electronic edition.) (Mt 4:23). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁴ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1984 (Mk 1:21). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

3. Often, in group situations, we are shy or unwilling to share the difficulties in our lives. Please try to be open with everyone and share a praise report in terms of some answer to prayer or let the group know about some difficulty or challenge you are experiencing.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, you have shown us the truth. You have allowed us to see perhaps a new side of a friend, or perhaps you have given us new resolve to move forward in what could be a challenging learning experience. Learning doesn't stop when we leave school. That's only the beginning of a new phase of learning which is often more difficult than school. This learning is less organized and typically not delivered by a teacher but through experience. Grant us wisdom, a desire to learn, and continue to open our hearts regarding your Word. Transform my mind so that I might take on the mind of Christ. I pray this in Jesus' name, the Son of the Father who is now and forever. Amen.

Educational Direction for Both Candidates

President George Bush	John Kerry
<p>Strengthen Head Start: Focus Head Start more clearly on school readiness, and allow states to integrate Head Start programs into their existing pre-school preparedness efforts in order to make better use of combined Federal and state resources. The President will give priority consideration for funding to states that have a coordinated early childhood plan involving Head Start, pre-K, and child care services.</p> <p>Promote Literacy: Train parents in early literacy through Head Start.</p> <p>Continue to Fund Research: President Bush will fund development of the most effective curricula and programs for teaching children early literacy and math skills; establish developmentally appropriate measurements; and identify effective adult and family literacy programs. http://www.georgewbush.com/Education/</p> <p>Increase Student Financial Aid to Help More Students Afford College - More than 10.3 million students will be able to afford college through President Bush's record \$73 billion in financial aid assistance - an increase of \$25.9 billion, or 55 percent, over 2001. The President's plan will provide a record \$12.9 billion investment in Pell Grants, a 47 percent increase over 2001, to help an additional one million students afford college.</p> <p>Offer an Enhanced Pell Grant - The President will allow low-income students who take the rigorous high school curriculum required by the State Scholars program to receive up to \$1,000 in additional Pell Grant funding, bringing the total maximum award up to \$5,050.</p> <p>Education in General Supports school vouchers. Signed the No Child Left Behind Act, calling for increased annual testing in grades 3 to 8. Signed new law that makes tax exemptions available for college tuition. Supports taxpayer-financed vouchers for tuition at parochial or other private schools. Opposes making federally backed bonds available for school repair and construction. Opposes making preschool available to all 4-year-olds.</p> <p>Education: "Two-and-a-half years ago there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for, and the Congress passed, the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation." http://www.azcentral.com/news/election/articles/campgn04-sidebyside.html</p>	<p>Making schools work for children. We will use testing to advance real learning, not undermine it, by developing high-quality assessments that measure the complex skills students need to develop. We will make sure that federal law operates with high standards and common sense, not just bureaucratic rigidity. Instead of pushing private school vouchers that funnel scarce dollars 2004 Democratic National Platform Committee Report – 32 away from the public schools, we will support public school choice, including charter schools and magnet schools that meet the same high standards as other schools.</p> <p>Making college affordable, we will make college more affordable, so that more young people get higher education, and more of those who graduate get relief from the crushing burden of debt. We will make student aid faster and simpler to get so students aren't scared off by the complicated process. We will offer generous tax credits to reduce the price of four years of college for all students, including those who pay their own way and can least afford college now. We will strengthen our aid programs for students while eliminating wasteful subsidies for lenders. At a time when all good jobs increasingly depend on advanced skills, we will strengthen technical training for those who do not attend college. Finally, we must place a special emphasis on expanding achievement in math and science.</p> <p>Make College Affordable For All And Expand Lifelong Learning - As president, John Kerry will offer a fully refundable College Opportunity Tax credit on up to \$4,000 of tuition for every year of college and offer aid to states that keep tuitions down. And he will launch a new effort to ensure that all of our workers can get the technical skills and advanced training they need.</p> <p>Continue Reform And Put A Great Teacher In Every Classroom Great teachers are the foundation of a great school. As president, John Kerry will enact a new bargain that offers teachers more, including better training and better pay in troubled schools, and asks for more in return, including fast, fair ways to make sure that teachers who don't belong in the classroom don't stay there.</p> <p>Offer 3.5 Million After-School Opportunities Through "School's Open 'Til Six" John Kerry and John Edwards are strong supporters of after-school programs. They give students extra help, keep them out of trouble, and offer peace of mind to working parents. The Kerry-Edwards "School's Open 'Til Six" initiative will offer after-school opportunities to 3.5 million children, through programs that are open until 6 p.m. and offer safe transportation for children. http://www.johnkerry.com/issues/education/</p>