

Truth or Chains



The Dangers of Christian Education

“What condemnation to profess a religion that must be Spirit and life, while devoting genius and learning to the fleshly pursuit of the dead letter, denying for today that same powerful moving of the Holy Spirit that marked the first church!”

William Law

This article is part two of “Learning Spiritual Truth.” If you haven’t read that article yet, please do so before reading this one. It will help avoid confusion!

You may ask, “Is Christian Education is dangerous?”

“Yes, very dangerous!”

First, let’s define Christian education as any institution or learning environment that requires an academic study approach to the Bible. Do they have grades? Do they have tests? Does it result in the accumulation of biblical facts? If the answer is yes, then it is the Christian education that I’m addressing in this article.

It’s really very simple. If you’ve read “Learning Spiritual Truth,” then you know that we learn spiritual truth only by the Holy Spirit. There’s no particular study technique or advantage to possessing more intelligence when it comes to learning spiritual truth. We must humbly come to God for spiritual truth from the scriptures as the Holy Spirit reveals it, which results in knowing Jesus Christ.

Any study of the Bible that doesn’t depend on the Holy Spirit’s revelation results in knowledge about the Bible, but not spiritual truth or knowing Jesus. This was exactly the issue with the Scribes and Pharisees. They knew all about Bible, but they didn’t know Jesus! (John 5:39-40)

In Ephesians 1:17, the Apostle Paul wrote “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better.” If academics were necessary to know Jesus, then Paul might have prayed that they would learn good study techniques and study hard, but Paul knew that it was only by the Holy Spirit that Jesus would be revealed.

So where’s the danger? The danger is in accumulating knowledge that doesn’t lead to knowing Jesus, but instead produces pride. In 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 we read “Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.” “Puffs up” equals pride, and that’s bad because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)

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Do you see the dilemma? In the very effort to know God (by Christian Education) we put ourselves in a situation where God opposes us! Additionally, we're deceived and think we know something, when in fact we do not yet know as we ought to know. Instead of striving to know something we should be in the pursuit of knowing Someone. We should heed Peter's admonition: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18)

So what about all the institutions of Christian education. Personally, I believe they are the result of man's attempt to imitate the world's methods for success. Think about it. To become a doctor or engineer—you finish high school, go on to college and get a degree, then go and practice your profession. Similarly, in Christianity today, a person goes to bible college, then maybe seminary, gets a degree, then gets hired as a pastor in a church and practices "his profession." But the Bible teaches us that being a pastor is not a profession, it's a gift. (Ephesians 4:11)

You may respond, "But I believe the Lord has called me to be a pastor (teacher, counselor, missionary, fill in the blank)! How am I supposed to prepare if I don't go to Bible College or Seminary?" That's a good question and one we'll look at in more detail in the next article. For now, I encourage you to look at the numerous examples in the Bible of how God prepared men and women for the tasks he gave them.

In the meantime, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Colossians 2:8)

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