

“The Heart Of Education Is The Education Of The Heart”

Gary McDade

Perhaps you have heard the thought expressed in the title. The wise man wrote, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The heart is the part with which we think, and what we think defines who we are. Again, the wise man illuminates the subject with the words, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7a). The need for educating the heart is illustrated by a story that has been widely circulated over the years from a high school teacher.

I Taught Them All

I have taught in high school for ten years. During that time I have given assignments, among others, to a murderer, a pugilist, a thief and an imbecile. The murderer was a quiet little boy who sat on the front seat and regarded me with pale blue eyes; the pugilist lounged by the window and let loose at intervals in a raucous laugh that startled even the geraniums; the thief was a gay-hearted Lothario with a song on his lips; and the imbecile, a shifty-eyed little animal seeking the shadows.

The murderer awaits death in the state penitentiary; the pugilist lost an eye in a brawl in Hong Kong; the thief, by standing on tip-toe, can see the window of my room from the county jail; and the once gentle-eyed little moron beats his head against a padded wall in the state asylum.

All these pupils once sat in my room, sat and looked at me gravely across worn brown desks. I must have been a great help to those pupils . . . I taught them the rhyming scheme

of the Elizabethan sonnet and how to diagram a complex sentence (Naomi White, 201).

Had equal efforts been exerted educating the hearts of these subjects, think of how differently the outcome might have been! The pain and suffering inflicted, the sheer waste of human ability and existence could have been avoided all together or at least averted and minimized.

A Bible Example

In 457 B.C., the Persian King Artaxerxes commissioned the Jewish scribe and priest Ezra to return to Jerusalem to bring order among the returning captives. The royal letter, appearing in Ezra 7:11-26, granted Ezra the civil authority necessary to reestablish worship and service to God in the newly reconstructed temple with the supportive financing that would be required to carry the project forward. The decree to reestablish Jerusalem as the center of Jewish worship and culture also contained the foreboding words, “And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment” (v. 26). These observations are an effort to allow the

In Ezra 7:10 we read, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

visualization of the background of some of what went into Ezra preparing his heart to do God’s will. In Ezra 7:10 we read, “For Ezra had

prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." By educating his heart Ezra was empowered to accomplish great and lasting things to his memory and to the greater glory of God. No plausible reason may be introduced which could suggest similar results would fail to reward similar convictions at other points in history.

The preparation or education of Ezra's heart involved three ingredients indicated in this passage. One, Ezra prepared his heart to *seek the law* of the Lord. Two, Ezra determined *to do it* or obey what the law of the Lord taught him. And, three, Ezra's understanding and commitment to God's revealed will yielded the fruit of eagerness *to teach* in Israel statutes and judgments. Because Ezra properly prepared or educated his heart the entire nation of Israel was brought back home where the opportunity to worship and serve Jehovah God uniquely was situated.

A Message for Us

Those living chronologically on this side of the cross are reminded by the voice of inspiration to educate their hearts after God's will and upon so doing rich rewards follow. Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18). The Bible is a tool God uses as a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). The properly educated heart grants confidence to the faithful Christian, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (I Jn. 3:21).

REFERENCES

White, Naomi *Progressive Education* (November 1943) in *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom, A Handbook for teachers and parents*, (1976) Jack Canfield and

Harold C. Wells eds. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.).