

# More Education

Ahhh Summer! Time for a break from all the study. No more early morning treks to school, no more long days at school, no more homework. Catechism and society are finished. Finally, some time for myself; some time to relax, spend hours at the beach or pool to soak up the rays. Now I can stay up late, hang out with friends, spend hours and hours with video games, or perhaps work at a part time job. (After awhile, however, most would have to admit that boredom becomes a real problem.)

As we kick back for the summer, students in every other wealthy “Information Age” country are still sitting in school.

On average, in the United States, students attend school 180 days, in the UK 190 days and in Eastern Asia 208 days. It would appear to be no coincidence that Eastern Asian students generally perform well on international comparison tests. Many of the countries where students outscored ours have instructional calendars that are 3-4 weeks longer each year than that provided for American students.

In Germany and Japan, learning is serious business and “academic time” is rarely interrupted. In the United States, conversely, students can receive a high school diploma if they devote as little as 40 percent of their school time to core academic work. Estimated focused academic hours in mathematics, science, language and social studies during the final four years of schooling include: USA 1,462, Japan 3,190, France 3,285 and Germany 3,628.

(<http://www.schoolmatch.com/articles/sp2005MAR.htm>)

Why do we take a three-month break from school? Has this been demonstrated to be the best way to prepare the next generation for their work and life in this world, or is the pattern a leftover remnant of a day when most school children were needed to help out on the farm? Unless American children have been gifted with superior abilities to absorb knowledge and are able to afford three months off and still surpass the people of other nations in skill and value in the workforce, we ought to take a serious look at the time spent on education.

Our flesh would like to do little else than enjoy what we want and desire. Children often need to be commanded and forced to complete their work and education. Eventually we realize that enjoying what one wants requires earning the money to pay for it. Although there are always exceptions, in the majority of cases, each level of college education that one receives increases your overall earning potential. A basic principle, then, in our society is that more learning results in more earning potential. And more earning potential increases the potential for satisfying our desires in life.

Education has become the foundation and heart of our society. Too much time spent with learning and earning, however, reduces the amount of time one is able to enjoy the fruit of his labors, so we need some sort of balance.

Another factor to consider is our time and place in history. When the majority of people abandoned education at the 8th grade, then this majority seemed to be able to make a decent living at the earning potential that an 8th grade education afforded. As society and the world change, and more people gain higher levels of education, then it becomes more difficult for those at a lower level of education to adapt to life in this society and make a decent living.

Should we be sending our children to school longer under the highest caliber of education possible so that they have the best chance for a solid college education? As Christians, of course, we don't seek more money simply to satisfy our own desires, but we seek first the kingdom of God. The operation of the kingdom of God while it is manifest in this earthly life requires money, lots of it. We have schools and churches to build, ministers and teachers to pay, mission work to do, poor to care for, etc. God gives talents that require education for full development and use in the kingdom of God.

Let us be careful here. We stand at the edge of great temptation, blindness, and deception. Education, money, prestige, power, security—that sounds good. I would like that, especially if I can have it in the name of the kingdom of God. We need to be careful. God warns us, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). God's word is full of such warnings. If we think we can piggyback our aspirations for education, money, prestige, power, and security in the name of the kingdom of God, we are doomed. Our survival as a church does not depend upon the wealth of its members, but rather on the grace of God alone.

We do live in a world where an educated workforce is increasingly important. We also have greater opportunities for a college education. Of utmost importance to us as Christians, however, is the fact that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world. We belong to a different kingdom. Our time, energy, education, money, and life is wrapped up in an entirely different cause. Isn't it? Or are we having a hard time coming up with the money for church budget and other kingdom causes because it is all tied up in a college savings account? The devil would be delighted if our attention to the kingdom of God was pushed aside by worldly aspirations of education and wealth. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting

get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7). Every hour of education dedicated to our life on this earth ought to be balanced with an hour in the classroom of Christ. Sending our children to a Christian school is a good start, but we must pack in heavy reserves of instruction from Christ before they leave the sphere of the home.

Do we need more education? Most certainly, but I don’t think we necessarily need longer school years or even more college degrees. Instead of filling three months of summer with mindless fun, take the opportunity to exercise your mind and talents with very practical work in the kingdom of God. Going to the convention is an excellent way to spend that time. During the school year, the pastors and teachers reduce a parent’s work-load by giving sound biblical instruction to the children during the school day. Parents should not be lax in continuing that education during the summer months. During the walks or bike rides we take we can point out the marvel and beauty of God’s creation. Taking a ride to view a beautiful sunset or to stand in awe as God’s judgment on sin as displayed in the storm clouds above. Summer is a great time to increase our fellowship with saints and find opportunity to gather and encourage each other in our calling as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Summer is also a great time for us to strengthen our own devotional time. Without the structure of a rigid school schedule we can possibly find time to spend an extra 5–10 minutes in prayer. Our children will learn an invaluable lesson by just seeing us make time to spend in reading God’s word and praying silently.

Pursue the development of your gifts and skills with a college education if you feel that is best, but before rushing out after all these opportunities and swallowing the intellectual feasts at college laden with the poisons of worldly philosophy, we need to answer some questions for ourselves. Do we desire that our sons grow up to be ministers, elders, or deacons in the church as much as we do that they have a good job? Do our daughters know that the highest calling for a women is to be a mother in Zion? And if God withholds children so that they do not have the work of raising their own children, are our daughters ready to give themselves to the work of the church in other areas? Do we make sure that when they are attending college they are also getting a good sound reformed education in church, bible study, and retreats when possible? Are they taking time to read the Beacon Lights or Standard Bearer or other Reformed books? When they are presented with opposition to godly views, are they confident in their knowledge to speak boldly with others about what they believe and know to be true? Do we stress to our children the need and importance of single individuals in the church to help relieve the earthly kingdom work so that the mothers and fathers of small children can take on the awesome responsibility of instructing the next generation of warriors?

Education for the people of God is a matter of life and death. But it is not the kind of education that gives us an economic edge in the world. Let us take heed to the

warning of God to his people, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4:6)