

September 1992

From the Heart— Why the Struggle?

Why is it that there is conflict in trying to get our children to learn? I recently read a book by Ruth Beechick which made many facets of home schooling fall into place. It described how the traditional educational system has neglected some very vital factors. Christian-based curriculum often overlooks some of these same factors. Much educational material is founded upon humanistic philosophies which neglect God. Simple inclusion of God in the curriculum does not restore education to its proper state. What has been overlooked is that the key to learning is not the mind or brain, but the heart. The heart is that part of our being which is responsible for motivation, enthusiasm, joy, fascination, awe, curiosity, commitment, etc. At the other extreme, frustration and discouragement also flow from the heart.

When the heart and the qualities for which it is responsible are neglected, man is reduced to the level of an animal. Then, the only way to accomplish learning is through behavior modification techniques: reward and punishment! Gold stars and freedom from hassles if you cooperate with the system; punishment if you do not. But this system is much more effective at training in social values, (or lack thereof), than it is in teaching facts, much less the understanding of those facts. (For an inside look at how social values are trained in the classroom, read *Dumbing Us Down* by John T. Gatto, New York State Teacher of the Year.)

In light of the *heart* of education, I considered students labeled as learning disabled. Certainly, our children are amazingly unique, some with very unusual ways of perceiving academic subjects. In spite of all these, the most important factor is the desire to learn. Consider historical personalities such as Helen Keller who overcame seemingly impossible circumstances. Those who have difficulties with verbal skills or mathematical concepts need special attention. They do not need a teacher to get frustrated or angry with them for not learning the material. They need someone to come alongside them, understand exactly how they think and then help them to understand new words, concepts, etc. This is precisely how the Holy Spirit deals with us. He is called the comforter, or Paraclete, which means one who comes alongside us. He has a feeling for our infirmity.

Beechick's book, *Biblical Psychology of Learning*, though not the easiest reading, has a powerful message. It emphasizes the personal relationship which is necessary for learning to occur. Teaching knowledge to children is not tremendously difficult, but *training* how to use information and solve problems is a skill, which comes through practice, which requires willingness. The difference between the two is vital! The steps in training

involve generous doses of: 1. imitation, 2. receiving instruction, and finally, 3. soloing. (We tend to skip step 1, abbreviate step 2 and then wonder why our children get frustrated when they try to do it on their own.) Try applying the above steps to any of the skills subjects, such as phonics, reading, writing, drawing, math, or even Christian living. Skills are best learned through a process called discipleship. The process might also be called apprenticeship.

Have a great year. If we can be any assistance, feel free to call. May God bless your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Greg Stablein

P.S. Jeremiah Wade, 6 year-old son of Terry and Pat, fell recently and received a compound fracture to his right forearm (ulna). He was hospitalized for several days and underwent surgery to clean the wound. Please remember him and their family in your prayers. If you would like to help with their needs, you may contact their church: Community Bible Church / 650 New York Ave. / Memphis, TN 38104 (901)726-9673. Mention account MB-1.