
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and has published in various creation publications, such as the Creation Research Society Quarterly, Creation magazine, the Journal of Creation (TJ), and Origins (from the Biblical Creation Society, UK).

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary for viewing the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to wspencer@creationanswers.net.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings,

September, being the beginning of the academic year, is a time to think about education. I have included in this issue an article explaining my own philosophy of education as a Christian. This article is based on something I once did for a job application at a Christian school. I have rewritten it to treat it more broadly, considering Home Schoolers as well as parents who send their children to public schools. I hope that whichever category your family represents regarding education, this article will be helpful.

Also in this issue is a review of a creation based science curriculum published by Answers in Genesis. Though this curriculum covers all the sciences, I decided to do a review of the Earth Science portion of it, which is a set of books called "God's Design for Heaven and Earth." "God's Design" is a good resource for Home School parents. There is a more detailed review on my website.

Finally, I hope some of you will take advantage of the new Discussion Board on my website. The Discussion Board is a secure system where anyone that registers can post questions or comments on topics related to creation and evolution and the Bible. The system tracks comments by topic. Using it is free. I recommend it for high school age and up. People who have not registered cannot see the posts or take part. To take a look, click on the "Discussion Board" button on creationanswers.net.

Wayne Spencer, M.S., Physics

A Christian Philosophy of Education

by Wayne Spencer

What follows is a philosophy of education based on something Wayne Spencer once wrote for a job application for a teaching position at a Christian school. A number of additions have been made to it for this newsletter.

Christian parents face many decisions regarding their children's educations. Public, private Christian schools, private non-Christian schools, magnet schools, or Home Schooling. Then as the children approach college similar questions arise though the young person must take a stronger role in the decisions. The main question here is what is the best type of educational environment for learning of the above options. Regardless of what educational path parents and their children take, it is important for Christian parents to take an active role in their children's education. Christian parents want to see their kids not only be prepared for college and career, but be prepared to live out their faith and serve God in the world. Christians who are teachers have the same goal as Christian parents for the education of young people but they approach it from a different direction.

There is a need for Christians to clearly understand what a Christian or Biblical Philosophy of Education is, regardless of how their children are schooled. A Christian approach to education begins with a Biblical World View. In the Christian view, the transcendent infinite and personal God of the Bible has revealed truth to mankind in the 66 book Holy Bible. I have the strong conviction that the Bible is completely without error in its original manuscripts and that we possess english translations today

that are reliable and accurate representations of the original manuscripts. Since the Bible is authored ultimately by God, it has authority over all human knowledge and experience. The Bible speaks with authority in everything it touches upon, though it does not speak exhaustively on many matters. The Bible includes well-chosen details to serve God's purpose. Further investigation and study, done outside of Scripture, can fill in historical or other details at times. But we know that whatever man may learn from human reasoning and investigation is uncertain compared to Scripture.

The Bible speaks to all of life and to all of life equally. This has many implications for all the disciplines taught through the education process. The Bible is just as relevant to personal lifestyle issues, to social problems, or to intellectual questions. Thus the Bible must provide the framework and foundation upon which all the academic disciplines are built. This means much more than the Bible being taught in a Christian school or college in Bible or Theology courses. It means the instructors have thought through how to build and interpret their discipline in such a way as to base it on a Biblical Christ-centered framework. Christian parents want their kids to get a Christian perspective on all the content areas, as much as possible. H. W. Byrne has written that a Christian educational curriculum should be "Bible integrated, pupil related, and socially applied.**"

The integration of a Christian World View into the subject areas should not mean that a broad education is not important, as if the Bible is all young people need to know. A good education should cover the full scope of human learning. There is at least some meaning and value in even the work of non-Christian scholars because in spite of some wrong things they may say, they are made in the image of God. They will make valid points. Also, it is necessary to understand the ideas that have shaped the world we live in. We need to understand why others think

the way they do and be able to talk to people intelligently. Even a nonbeliever will reflect God given talents that are of value. But all ideas should be tested against the Truth of Scripture. In whatever field of ministry or career that a Christian enters in life, they must wrestle with questions about what ideas to follow and what to avoid as they try to live out their faith.

The Christian World View makes every individual of very high worth in the sight of God since God created each human being in His image and, in the person of Christ, He died to redeem all. For educators this means every student is of great worth and should be taught and trained in such a way as to help them come to know Christ as Lord and Savior and learn to apply that Lordship to all areas of their life. The goal of this for the student is that they would live a productive abundant life which serves and glorifies God. A Christian educator wants to challenge their students to develop their abilities to their limits. Thus the student must be challenged and encouraged. Students should receive a sufficiently broad education to be properly prepared to live as productive responsible citizens. Many habits and values learned in the school or college years become very important for the remainder of a person's life.

Having a broad education may entail them learning some subjects they have limited abilities at or which they have little interest in. But at the least, this will prepare them to understand others who do have more abilities in those areas. There is value in being stretched in areas of your weakness, so long as it is not overwhelming. Even if you do a career that uses your greatest abilities, there may be times when it requires that you do things that are weaknesses. So there are many reasons to value a broad education. Also, students do not know what they will need to know later in life, so having a broad education is valuable to make the student

more able to adapt to the unpredictable demands of life later on. This is a very important point because in today's world, most people will have more than one career over the course of their life. It is important to be able to adapt in the economic uncertainties of today's world. Also, having a broad education does not mean there is not reason to pursue high levels of education to specialize in some area, such as in earning a Ph.D. in some field. It means that such education should have a broad foundation. Christians should be encouraged to pursue high levels of education because too often the academic arenas (or any field where high levels of expertise are required) are left entirely to nonbelievers.

Providing young people a Christian education must involve not only imparting information and developing academic skills, but also training in values and behavior. A Christian approach to the various subjects will entail different content at times than a secular approach as in public schools. The secular approach of public schools leaves out God and generally presents subjects in a distorted amoral or immoral context. Examples of this would be the significance of Christian faith to early U.S. History and teaching a creationist perspective toward science. The goal of a Christian curriculum should be to give the student a more complete and healthy view of the various subjects by including the spiritual and moral aspects as well as the usual facts.

A Christian education must establish a setting in which the students learn that there is true right and wrong based on God's authority. God, as our Maker, has the right to set the rules for all mankind. God has given primary responsibility for children's educations to their parents, not to their school. The parents have God-given authority over their children and parents may delegate authority to a school for educating their child. This is how a Principal or a classroom Teacher acquires authority in a elementary or secondary school. Thus,

Christian schools exist to serve parents, for God's glory. Parents should be kept informed about their children's progress for this reason and on many occasions it is important for the Teachers to communicate with the parents and enlist their help to hold students accountable.

In Home Schooling, parents do not delegate the teaching task to professional teachers but take the task on themselves. Home Schooling is a very good and very challenging option. Home Schooling parents often get their children involved in interesting field trips and group activities with other home schooled kids. In Home Schools, there is the freedom to do many creative and practical things that are not often a part of traditional classroom environments. The interaction with parents and other home schooled kids avoids some of the unhealthy aspects of a traditional school environment. It is important to make sure your young people get a good balanced education. But in doing that, Home Schooling provides parents the opportunity to most directly influence their children of any means of education. Parents who do not Home School also have many ways to influence their kids and it is important for parents to actively involve themselves in their kids education.

God's moral laws and principles (from the Bible) apply to all people regardless of whether they believe in Him. This is not unjust because God, as our Creator, has designed us to live by certain moral principles. It is unhealthy and unfulfilling to live contrary to that. Also, the Bible indicates all people know enough to have reason to believe in God's existence (see Romans 1:18-20). Since God has established reality such that there are painful consequences of sin, it is appropriate for a school (and for parents) to establish consequences for misbehavior. Thus the purpose of discipline is not just to control the student but also to teach right and wrong and respect for authority. This

is one aspect of training the student in proper responsible behavior. Another type of training in proper behavior comes from the student observing their parents (and teachers) and their Christian peers. In a Christian school setting, the teachers should be excellent examples of Christlike character and lifestyle.

Since young people are prone to resisting authority, avoiding academic work, and generally behaving in an irresponsible manner, school administrators and teachers continually face the issue of discipline. Young people have a greater tendency to misbehave when they are away from their parents. This is one reason traditional school environments can foster misbehavior. This need not always be so however if the school is managed well. Parents should spend time talking to the Principal or Headmaster of a school with the goal of understanding their approach to discipline. Parents should also talk to their children's teachers about discipline and also ask the teachers how the Principal backs up the disciplinary actions taken by the teachers. The chain of authority must all be intact and function with good relationships, from the student to the teacher, the teacher to the Principal, and the Principal to the parents. Discipline policies should be carried out justly and consistently and there should be a consistent approach agreed on by the teachers and administrators. In dealing with behavior and other student-teacher problems, student actions as well as attitudes must be addressed in ways appropriate for the student and the situation. This is important because students are people and their problems should be addressed in a personal way and yet in a way that demonstrates to them consistent unchanging expectations. Confrontation of sin is something Jesus did often with his disciples, but how he responded was controlled and deliberate because he valued the individual being confronted. The goal is to produce Christlike character in the student

and prevent one student from interfering with the welfare or learning of other students.

It is important to consider the purposes of education from a Christian perspective. Most people in the world would agree that getting a good education teaches a person how to think, it also helps an individual to know themselves, their society, and their environment. An education is also intended to help the individual make wise decisions and earn a living. All these purposes are valid and important, but they are not the greatest purposes of a good education. When God and Biblical truth are omitted from one's education, the academic study tends to lead to futility and meaninglessness. But knowledge and skills coupled with a Biblical World View leads to a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Thus, a Christian education should contribute to the individual enjoying life as they follow Jesus Christ. It is worth noting that parachurch ministries can help obtain a Christian education in even a secular educational institution. This is significant especially for young people in High School and college. Also, attendance at a Christian school or college does not insure that one will have a completely Biblical World View. But through whatever formal or informal means, a Christian education should help the person know and obey God. As Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

* Byrne, H. W., "A Christian Approach to Education," Zondervan and Mott Media, 1981, p 66.

Review of Answers in Genesis Science Curriculum

Answers in Genesis has published an elementary level science curriculum. I wanted to review the Earth Science segment of the series so that Home School parents and Christian teachers could be familiar with it. I obtained the three books collectively called "God's Design for Heaven and Earth." These books were individually entitled "Our Weather and Water," "Our Planet Earth," and "Our Universe." I recommend them to Christian parents who are Home Schooling their kids.

The God's Design books are written primarily for parents to use in teaching science to their children. Some of the vocabulary is above what children could understand, but parents could explain it to their kids. I did not find any recommendations on what age or grade level the material is appropriate for. I think this would depend some on the interest and motivation of the student, my guess would be that it is aimed at approximately ages 9 to 12. By using other supplemental materials on creation, or perhaps some library work, some of it could be adapted to students a few years older.

Each book has several subject units with several lessons each. The lessons have some type of activity and a quiz or questions to answer. There are some interesting hands-on activities in the lessons. Hands-on activities use very simple easy to find materials and are safe to do at home. Answers to the quizzes are provided in an Appendix. Though the books have color covers, inside the books are printed in black and white with grayscale images. Each book takes a clear young-age Biblical creation position and uses some Scripture to explain the concepts. The books have much practical science and standard material like other science curriculums but there is also much related to what the Bible teaches regarding origins. There are also interesting

biographies of scientists of the past and present, including space shuttle astronauts. The God's Design series may not include all the associated additional teaching aids that something from a typical school curriculum would have, but the content is generally very good. I found nothing for Christian parents to be concerned about in this series regarding the Biblical content.

My general impression is that parents would do well with this curriculum but it would be more effective if other supplemental materials could be found that provided pictures and visual aids related to some of the concepts. More visual aids and sometimes pictures are very needed. Some of the hands-on activities also need better illustrations to give directions on how to make it work.

I did find a few topics where the series is either not current with creationist research or is not quite correct in its science. However, I want to emphasize these problems are minor and some of it could be skipped over or easily supplemented with other creation materials. Overall I would heartily recommend the series to Christian parents who want to give their kids a Christian world view regarding science.

For a more detailed review (6 pages) see the following Acrobat file available for download from creationanswers.net.

The detailed review outline can be found in either "Reviews" or in "Teaching Aids" on creationanswers.net.

<http://creationanswers.net/teach/GodsDesHeavenEarth.pdf>

New Discussion Board on creationanswers.net

The creationanswers.net website now has a Discussion Board or Bulletin Board available. It allows users who have registered to post comments or questions

and all the posts are tracked under topic threads. It is free to register and set up your own login. Then your login must be activated so you can use the Board. The Discussion Board is recommended for high school age and up. Anyone can start a new topic thread on any issue they like and others can reply with comments. Nonchristians are also welcome as long as the posts are clean and respectful. People who do not behave appropriately on the board can be set to read only or their access turned off. People who have not registered will not be able to view the posts but will be able to see the main topic categories.

Wayne Spencer is the Admin for the Board. In time other creationists may be moderators assisting with managing the Board. The goal for the Board is to get a mix of people using it, some of whom are knowledgeable creationists who've published on creation and others who are just average Christians with an interest who have questions. It can also be a way for Christians to help each other by recommending good materials, commenting on news items, books, or TV programs, etc. Parents are welcome to post questions or comments from their kids.

So far the main topic categories set up on the Board are Genesis, Biology, Geology, General Astronomy, World Views and Creation, Education and Creation, and the Historical Accuracy of the Bible.

To get started using the new Discussion Board, go to <http://creationanswers.net/BBentry.html>. After entering the Board, the top Forum topic is for announcements and instructions. Click on the Register link at the top and fill out the form by creating your own login name and password. Your email would only be used for sending occasional necessary notifications to users of the Board. You can choose whether to make your email address visible to the other users or not.