

Column

School is back in session after the Christmas break, and young people are settling down to another period of learning those things they need to know to be literate and productive citizens.

This is all well and good. In a country such as ours, we need citizens who can read and write, add and subtract, understand history and know geography, think and problem solve. But, more is needed for human flourishing and the creation of a stable and happy society.

Teddy Roosevelt put his finger on that need when he said: "A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad."

Teaching facts and figures is not enough. Children, right from the start, need to be inculcated with virtue and wisdom. The wisdom of which I am thinking is not human wisdom, but the wisdom spoken of in Proverbs 2:6: "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Many lessons I learned in school were not found in the textbooks. They rather had to do with virtue and wisdom. For example, in the sixth grade, I prefaced my answer to a question by the teacher with the phrase, "If you want to know the truth." I shall never forget the look she gave me and her words, "Of course I want to know the truth. I should expect nothing less from you."

Sadly, in many of today's government schools teachers' hands are tied in teaching virtue and wisdom, at least as coming from the Bible. Where then are children to receive such instruction? I see every Christian home as a university. There is no law forbidding the teaching of religion and morality in the home, yet this opportunity is often neglected or under realized.

Notice I did not begin with the Church, though sure the church has a part to play in the teaching of virtue and wisdom. Providing classes on Sunday and other days is important, but perhaps even more important is equipping parents and grandparents and others to carry on this instruction throughout the week at home.

Much can be learned from the example of Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley. She bore her husband, Samuel, a clergyman in the Church of England, 19 children, ten of whom lived. By the age of 5, each child

was taught to read from the Bible. They were also taught manners, responsibility and obedience.

Time is a factor in our busy world, but considering what is at stake -- the making or marring of a child -- dare we not to find it?

O LORD, Jesus Christ, who dost embrace children with the arms of thy mercy, and dost make them living members of thy Church; Give them grace, we pray thee, to stand fast in thy faith, to obey thy word, and to abide in thy love; that being made strong by thy Holy Spirit they may resist temptation and overcome evil; and may rejoice in the life that now is, and dwell with thee in the life that is to come; through thy merits, O merciful Saviour, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest one God, world without end. Amen.

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