

beautifully? Should we not really be teaching grammar all day? Is not everything a student writes a lesson in composition, whether in history, civics, geography, or anything else? Even more specifically, the geography of a country is closely related to its history, and the development of government never stands isolated from either one. It is surely good to teach the relationship between all of

these subjects, without wiping out the distinctions between them. The latter creates confusion: the former is conducive to orderly learning.

Interdisciplinary teaching, then, is not an option for us; rather, we should strive for that ideal of a truly **unified** curriculum, remembering the words of Proverbs 10:14; "Wise men lay up knowledge."

ACADEMIC AWARDS: ARE THEY GODLY REWARDS?

by Carol Brands

Lying on the bed just across the hallway from me is a little baby, one month old. He is our baby, my husband and I say, our first baby. Yet even as we say this we know that he is not our baby, not really. He is the Lord's child, given to us as a heritage with the task of training him in the service of the Lord. It is a child of God who is lying in the bedroom across the hallway.

My husband and I have been entrusted with the responsible privilege of training this child. God has created this child in such a way that he looks to us, his parents, to supply his needs and to teach him concepts and attitudes about God and God's world. As we behave, so he learns to behave. As we talk, so he learns to talk. As we in behavior and speech with discipline instruct him, so he learns to live before God.

Our responsibility is awesome, for through us this child learns to know God. If that is true, then it is important that we train him properly. How shall we train this child? What shall be our guide in deciding how to train him? How can we train him to **KNOW GOD**?

We know the answer in principle. Our position to the child is parallel to God's position to us. As God deals with us, his adult children, so we must deal with his little children. As He loves, we must love. As He rebukes, we must rebuke. As He chastens, we must chasten. As He deals gently, we must deal gently. As He leads by His Word and Spirit, so we must instruct by the Word in submission and dependence on the Spirit.

This guiding principle of parental training must be the principle also in the topic of this requested article. The topic as requested is an evaluation of the awards system in our schools. The issue, as I see it, is that of Godly motivation for our children. The motivation we provide must parallel the motivation God gives us, or else we fail to instruct in Godliness... and we fail in our responsibility.

I. Godly motivation

How we as adults need motivation to live the life of Godliness! Pressures on all

sides challenge us to give up the good fight of faith. We are called to sin by the news media, by the literature we read, by our society at large, by daily contacts in business, by struggling carnal members of the church, by our intimate friends and family, and most of all by our own weak and carnal natures. "Give up the fight!" these all challenge. "Live in pleasure, for yourself...at least once in awhile." And how this call to sin appeals to our egocentric, self-loving, proud and rebellious natures.

God never denies us that which we need. We need motivation to live the Godly life, and He provides it abundantly.

God's motivation, however, is not even similar to those motivations which the world offers. It has no appeal whatsoever to our proud, egocentric, hereditary natures. God's motivation for man is contrary to all of the foolishness inherent in us and is possible only by grace in Christ.

God's motivation for us is simply this: Himself. We desire God; we love God; we want to know God more and more.

This is an unnatural motivation, a queer motive in the eyes of men. No man at all would possess this motive apart from the Spirit of Christ which implants it in the heart through the Word.

But, planted and sustained by God, it is an abundant motive. To know God Himself! What better motive could we desire? If obedience to God results in greater fellowship with God, what greater incentive to obey could be found?

Love of God may not be for us one source of motivation alongside of others. This is THE motivation for a Christian, the only lawful motive. Any other reason for doing something must be in the service of THE reason for doing it. We labor alone out of love for God, which also expresses itself in love for the neighbor.

Accordingly, our children must be trained also to labor out of the motive of love for God and the neighbor. Since we as parents stand to the child in a relationship of God's representative, this training at first takes the form of love for the parent. Love for parents, maturing into love for God, must be the child's motivation. We must nurture this love in word, action, and discipline, in all of our child training.

II. Godly rewards

Rewards are a highly Biblical concept. The Bible approves of rewards as it uses various terms to denote rewards.

1. "A giving back again." Colossians 3:24. We "receive the reward of the inheritance."
2. "Hire/wage/reward."
 - Mt. 6:1. "Ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."
 - Mt. 6:2,5,&16. "They have their reward."
 - Rom. 4:4. "Then is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."
 - I Co. 9:17. "If I do this willingly, I have a reward."
 - I Co. 9:18. "What is my reward then?"
3. "Recompense."
 - II Sam. 22:21. "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness."
 - Ps. 103:10. "Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."
4. "Reward!" Jer. 31:16. "Thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord."
5. "Repay/make whole, complete." Pr. 25:22. "Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord shall reward thee."

There are other words in the original which the KING JAMES BIBLE translates "reward", but these five examples give the general idea of how the Bible uses the concept.

We repeat, then, that rewards are a firm Biblical concept. In regards to rewards, the Bible contains these ideas:

1. God rewards both good and evil.
2. God rewards both in this life and eternally.
3. All men by nature deserve the reward of wrath.
4. God rewards the good merely out of grace, because by nature no man would do good.
5. God rewards not external acts alone, but the motives or heart from which external acts proceed.
6. God's reward is Himself and His favor, His love, and all its accompaniments in salvation and eternal life.
7. God's reward is for His children a sure incentive, repeated often in Scripture for our encouragement.

The Bible also contains the distinct idea of rewards inherent in actions themselves, so that sowing wheat is "rewarded" with a wheat harvest while sowing thistles is rewarded with a harvest of thistles.

We as parents in our training are to be imitators of God in His dealings with us as His children. To our children we must be two things: instructors and examples of how God deals with us.

This means that we, standing before our children in God's stead, must reward our children. But we must reward in such a way that our rewards are instructive of the manner in which God rewards. Even our rewards are Godly instruction! Further, our rewards must be accompanied by verbal Godly instruction.

If the Bible speaks of two classes of rewards by God to His children, then these two classes of rewards should be part of covenantal instruction.

A. Rewards inherent in the activity

If we look through a concordance at the words which our Bible renders "award," we will find several words which more literally mean "fruit" or "recompense" or "a giving back again" or "wages (according to hire)". All these words, while designating rewards, actually refer to results of activities which are inherent in the activities themselves. The "reward" of sowing wheat, thus, is a wheat harvest. The "reward" of idleness is hunger.

This form of reward has an important place in our lives, although it is still subservient to the real reward. This reward is that of the joy of labor itself. Ecclesiastes 5:19 says that man should "rejoice in his labour: this is the gift of God." Man is to enjoy all the good things which God gives him. Labor is one good gift, and therefore man is also to find enjoyment in this gift itself.

God gives this gift of joy in labor to His adult children, and we must nourish this also in God's small children. We must teach them to enjoy their work first of all as a requirement of Godliness, and once they learn this they will learn also to enjoy work for itself, finding in the very work accomplished a reward.

How can parents and teachers teach joy in work itself? By giving work at the child's

level of ability, which he can accomplish and accomplish well, so that the accomplished work is in itself praiseworthy. By then giving the child due praise so that the child learns to find pleasure in the work. By setting a corollary example of enjoying our own work so that by our example, also, our children see work to be worthwhile, fruitful, and enjoyable.

B. The reward—beyond the activity itself

A look at various Bible passages, however, shows that this inherent reward is not the ultimate reward nor even the real reward to be sought in our activities. The Sermon on the Mount instructs us not to seek the things below but the things above, for then we have an eternal reward, not of man's praise but of the Father in heaven. Ecclesiastes speaks of work—of well done, prosperous, praiseworthy work—done apart from God's praise by saying, "I hated all my labour that I had laboured to do."

But THE reward is the same thing which motivates us in our work. THE reward is God Himself and the blessings of covenant life with Him. Thus God said to Abraham, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Our true reward is to experience God's gracious favor, to receive praise of Him.

Likewise in our dealings with our children. There is only one reward which is a real reward: the approval of the parent as God's representative. Praise alone is the real reward. The parent's smile, the parent's hug or kiss, the parent's word of approval is the reward which a child needs and which alone can truly motivate him.

III. Godly Awards

An award, by definition, is an honor or gift conferred on a person for some accomplishment.

The awards under consideration in this article are primarily those within a school system: the awards of honor rolls, salutatorian and valedictorian, and of financial awards accompanying achievement in these areas. This is what we usually mean when we speak of the "awards system" in our schools.

Are these awards a Godly form of reward?

It is my conviction that they are not. This conviction is a result both of my own experiences as I went through schools with awards systems and of much subsequent thought on the matter. I do not believe that an awards system within the home OR within the school is proper and profitable to covenant education.

Why not?

#1. Awards fail to be educational.

Education, we believe, is intrinsically a spiritual matter. Our goal in education is that the child mature into a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. The true content of education—even when we are teaching academics in the school—is Godliness.

And Godliness cannot be measured. Godliness is a matter of the heart. We cannot see into the heart to award that which really counts; thus we cannot award true education. Only God can do that.

#2. The awards system fails in Godly motivation.

THE motivation for God's children is love of God, desiring God's glory and praise. In children, this motivation is nurtured through the subservient motive of love of the parents, desiring their praise.

An awards system not only does not aid this motive, it contradicts this motive. When we set up a system of laboring to achieve distinction or public acclaim over other students, the motive which we foster is not love of God and love of neighbor but rather pride....simply pride, the antithesis of Godliness.

#3. Awards fail to be Godly rewards.

Awards are neither fruits of labor inherent in the labor nor the real reward of God Himself, His favor and praise. The awards system is a man-made and man-gearred system of motivation in labor, instructing the child to labor hard in order to do better than his peers in order to be honored by men as superior to his peers. Thus man sets up unGodly awards, either of man's praise or of man's money. Such false rewards should be meaningless to a child of God, accounted as "dung" because they are a hindrance in the struggle to attain Christ and His praise.

IV. Godly incentives

Yet, children are children. They are still in the years of types and shadows. Foolishness is still bound up in their hearts, often so strongly that they have a terrible struggle seeing the truth and seeking that which is above. The goal of God's praise can seem terribly unreal and distant to a child. Is there no form of tangible reward permitted to encourage the child?

First of all, the reward of parental praise is no future, distant reward. Praise should be bountiful, accompanying every accomplishment. The child who loves his parents will labor hard to earn that praise.

This love of the child is unquestionably hampered by sin, both in the parent and in the child. But while sin always makes difficult the ideal situation, we nonetheless set up our practices by principle, not pampering sin or the sinner.

Secondly, the child must be so instructed and guided by parental training in love—with rewards both negative and positive of chastisement and of praise—that he learns to see in labor the inherent rewards. He learns to color well because his parents praise good coloring and thus he learns himself to enjoy a well-colored product. He learns to study hard because he learns—first through parental insistence plus praise or maybe chastisements—that there is pleasurable profit in the results of diligent study. He learns to paint well, or sweep well, or clean the car well, or plow well, or practice music well, because he has been trained to enjoy well-done labor, wrought for God's sake.

Thirdly, I do believe a parent may encourage a child through special rewards expressive of his praise from time to time. These should never become award SYSTEMS so that the child begins to labor for the reward itself, possibly despising the parent while demanding the reward (even weekly allowances can be a danger here). But occasional special awards especially for especially difficult tasks, can encourage the child. Even in these occasional incentives, however, certain principles ought to be followed.

1. One child ought not to be exalted above another. All children should be able equally to attain the incentive reward.
2. The award incentive must be accompanied by instruction as well. The child must be instructed that the real reward is God's favor and work well done which by grace acknowledges that favor, but that this incentive is only an aid to encourage

him right now. Consistently taught that, the child will WANT fewer incentives as he matures.

3. The award should be for a short-range goal, emphasizing a single project rather than cumulative projects. The apostle Paul said that he would work forgetting those things that were behind and pressing forward to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Likewise a child must be trained not to count up his achievements but to deliberately and constantly lay aside the past, laboring in the present with a view to eternity. Setting long range incentives not only abets pride but can also greatly discourage the child if he fails.
4. Even award incentives should normally be given as an expression of parental pleasure AFTER the task is finished rather than promised ahead as a reward. During the task, verbal encouragement and assistance where needed will do far more good, anyway. Awards given after completion of a task serve far better as a means of reinforcement of the reward of praise.
5. It follows that award incentives should not be set up on a regular basis. If Jimmy is given an award for cleaning the car each time that he cleans it, he soon will refuse to clean the car willingly unless the award is forthcoming. Then he has failed to see the award as merely an incentive and has failed also to learn that his true rewards are (1) knowing that the car IS well cleaned, and (2) knowing that his parents and God are pleased if it was done willingly.

The conclusion of the matter which I come to is thus this. Parents and teachers of covenant children, be sure that in our instruction we amply surround our children with rewards, for these are necessary and important. Let these rewards be REAL rewards, of well accomplished work and of teacherly or parental praise, subject to the praise of God as the final reward. And if the child is struggling, if a task is difficult, then perhaps give an incentive award to show that the difficulty is understood and to reinforce the reward of praise...but even then with caution so as not to lessen the seeking of the true rewards. For only, finally, as the child labors for God alone with love for the neighbor will God be glorified in the life of that child.

TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST

by Randy Groenendyk

Over the years schools have changed in many ways. Teaching methods, course offerings, and even students themselves are now different from the way they used to be. But one aspect of school has remained pretty much the same: final examinations. Nearly every junior high school, high school, and college in the country insist upon giving them after each semester.

Today, however, exams are coming under close scrutiny and evaluation by many educators. Some advocate the elimination of exams, while others feel the merits of exams make them well worth retaining. It is fast becoming a controversial issue in the teaching world.

If convenience dictated what should be done, then there would be no choice but to cancel all exams—permanently.