



Education & Knowledge



Purpose of Education

“Education” may be defined as “the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction...”¹ Education can occur in various settings, but it’s usually associated with the school, college, or university. In Blacksburg, a small town with a major university, education is highly valued.

1. What is the purpose of education? What is the value² of education?
2. Does education sometimes fail to bring value? If so, in what ways, and why?

“Education” can also refer to “the knowledge or training acquired by the educational process.” Thus this lesson also concerns “knowledge.”

What Does the Bible Say about Education?

Education has been an important part of Jewish and Christian societies.³ But what does the Bible say about education? The word “education” is rare in English translations of the Bible, but the words “instruction, learning, training, knowledge, wisdom” are common. “Knowledge” and “wisdom” are related but “wisdom” more specifically conveys proper attitude and conduct.⁴

- 📖 “Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.” (*Proverbs 23:12, NIV*)
- 📖 “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out.” (*Proverbs 18:15, NIV*)
- 📖 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (*Proverbs 9:10, NIV; also see 1:7*)
- 📖 “For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” (*Proverbs 2:6, NIV*)
- 📖 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (*2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV*)
- 📖 “Fathers, do not exasperate⁵ your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (*Ephesians 6:4, NIV*)

¹ *Oxford Dictionary*.

² ‘value’ refers to the importance, worth or benefit of something.

³ Christianity greatly influenced the history of education, including provision of equal opportunity regardless of sex, class or ethnicity; and the development of the college and university. 92% of U.S. colleges and universities existing in 1932 had been founded by Christian organizations. These included Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, originally established as theological schools. (Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 190.)

⁴ James says true wisdom is identified by 1) its source – God; 2) its characteristics – good attitudes and conduct; and 3) its result – peace and righteousness (*James 3:13-18*). True wisdom is based on knowledge of God and his truth.

⁵ ‘exasperate’ – provoke to anger, irritate, annoy very much

3. What do the above Bible verses say about education and knowledge?



Two Separate Realms of Education?

Some people may think the Bible addresses only the spiritual (or religious) realm,⁶ and contributes little to (or even conflicts with) the “real world” realm of education.⁷ It is true that the Bible’s teaching is primarily theological (about God and his relation to his creation), but it overlaps with other disciplines of study and applies to all of God’s creation.

4. Are there dangers in neglecting or excluding the Bible’s teaching from other areas of knowledge?⁸ If so, what are they?⁹

📖 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools... They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator (*Romans 1:22, 25, NIV*)

📖 “...the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom” (*1 Corinthians 1:25, NIV*)¹⁰

Relating God's Word to Our Education & Knowledge

5. Consider *your* area of study, teaching, or knowledge. In what specific ways can God’s Word¹¹ (and knowing God) be related or applied to your area?¹²

The most important knowledge is the knowledge of the eternal God. Knowing Christ is the greatest value (*Philippians 3:4-11*). Through faith in Jesus Christ, we enter into a personal knowledge of God, and this knowledge should affect *all* of life!

Reflection & Application

- Have you entered into a personal knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ? If you have questions about this, seek answers.
- Brothers and sisters, reflect on question 5 and determine how you can relate or apply your knowledge of God to your area of study, teaching or knowledge.

⁶ ‘realm’ - field or domain of activity or interest.

⁷ This claim is often made relative to the natural sciences, and some people extend it to the social sciences and humanities, though the Bible clearly addresses aspects of history, anthropology, and human behavior. Furthermore, since God is the creator of the ‘real world,’ sound science and sound interpretation of the Bible should ultimately be in harmony, because both disciplines concern knowledge of reality. (Some Christians may dispute this statement.) For more, see *Belief in God in the Modern Age of Science* and *Can a Scientist Believe in God?* on the ICF website.

⁸ In response to this question, someone may ask, ‘How does Christian belief affect natural science?’ Some people think Christian belief may *hinder* science. However, Christians who are scientists are just as devoted as anyone else in studying the natural world in order to discover how it works and how this knowledge can benefit humankind.

⁹ Many allow secular education to have authority over the Bible’s teaching, and God is displaced by other ‘gods.’ For example, faith in science can displace faith in God. On the other hand, when God’s word is primary, all other disciplines are viewed in the light of God’s revelation. Knowledge without moral direction can be dangerous. Great discoveries and developments can be used for good or evil. Wisdom is needed, and true wisdom comes from God.

¹⁰ Paul says this after contrasting the world’s wisdom with *God’s wisdom in Christ*, particularly the message of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross that provided the way for our salvation, which some people consider foolish.

¹¹ Since the Bible is ‘God-breathed’ (*2 Timothy 3:16; cp. 2 Peter 1:20-21*) it is ‘God’s word.’

¹² For example, how can you serve and glorify (reflect) God in your specific areas of knowledge?