

Developing a Literacy, Legacy, and Worldview Using Bible Reading, Psalms, and Proverbs

by Brent Harken

One concern many have expressed to me is that they see students more affected by modern American pop culture than by the Scriptures and their position in God's kingdom. I believe this trend can be reversed as schools seek to biblically educate students. The question is how?

It is important that classical Christian schools give careful consideration to the way in which they use the Word of God in their schools—especially in the elementary years. Classical Christian schools know the importance

of implementing Scripture in our schools, but have we drifted from what have been our historic roots? Important pillars of a historic biblical education were the following: (1) learning and singing the Psalms, (2) knowing and studying the Proverbs, and (3) the public reading of Scripture. These were central to Hebraic-Christian education in the past. The purpose of this article is to take a fresh look at the curriculum and pedagogy for Bible memorization and Scripture reading in the elementary years.

First, it is important to ask many foundational and reflective questions to shake our paradigm for why we do what we do regarding the Scriptures such as: does singing implant the Word of God in us in a unique and beneficial way? Why is there a hymn book in the middle of the Bible and what are we to make of it today? What are the purposes and benefits derived from singing

God's thoughts back to Him? What are the purposes and benefits derived in the memorization of the Proverbs? How are we to educate students to know and love the Word of God, as well as understand and apply it accurately? We live in exciting times and modern classical Christian education is in its infancy. We are just beginning

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, . . .

II Timothy 3:16

to ask and unfold answers to these and many other questions.

Classical Christian schools should attempt to ask and answer many of the questions above and develop a solid classical Christian education where the Scriptures are paramount. Schools should implement a number of important items that together build a solid base of biblical literacy and application such as singing psalms corporately as a school Monday mornings and in individual classes throughout the week, memorizing the book of Proverbs beginning in first grade and culminating in twelfth, publicly reading the Scriptures twice a day, teaching through the Bible twice and developing tools for more advanced Bible study in dialectic and rhetoric classes, and orienting the school calendar around the historic Church calendar.

The goal is to create an

environment where God's Word is revered, taught, and lived—creating a culture intentional in building a liturgy of life and a legacy of faithfulness.

This begins in the elementary by memorizing the psalms and proverbs through singing, chants, and sound offs. Schools should utilize the public reading

of the Scriptures in the morning and afternoon. Also, teachers should use the pedagogical tools of the sound off, catechism, singing, chanting and memorization of other Scripture, creeds, and works to

infuse a Christian paideia. In conclusion, let me briefly attempt to defend why three of the items listed above are very beneficial.

Why sing psalms? We sing for three primary reasons. First, it is commanded in the New Testament that we speak and sing psalms (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Secondly, the Psalms have three beneficial interpretative paradigms: they reveal the life, prayers, thinking and promises of that day; they provide valuable patterns, teachings and prayers for our life of faith. Singing psalms enhances and develops worshipers. Lastly, all the psalms are all about Jesus and unfold the messianic promise in vivid detail. The singing of the psalms provides many blessings!

Why memorize the book of Proverbs? The Scripture has provided many tools to assist the believer to live the sanctified life. Some are designed for specific

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functions for the people of God. Just as the book of Psalms is the Bible's hymnal, the book of Proverbs is the Bible's catechism. Proverbs 1:2-5 states its purposes: (1) attaining wisdom and discipline; (2) gaining understanding; (3) acquiring a disciplined and prudent life; (4) providing a life that is right, just and fair; (5) giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young; (6) adding to learning, and (7) providing discernment and guidance to understand parables, proverbs, sayings, and wisdom. Proverbs is filled with succinct, pithy truths that are applicable to every area and situation of life. They contrast wisdom with folly, painting clear and indelible images that flash into our minds as we encounter nearly every situation. They direct our moral choices like a keel on a ship. They set the road map for clearly distinguishing the causes and effects of choices, and direct one to the way of life.

Why publicly read the Scriptures twice a day? We read for a number of reasons. It "makes one wise for salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). It provides knowledge of the biblical characters, themes, stories, teachings, and plotline. It's the avenue of faith—"faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It develops foundational tools for faithful living that will be accessed later in the child's education.

The above uses of Scripture are a blessing and may be of use for Christian educators to more effectively utilize the Word of God in their schools. There are many

ways a school can work toward developing a biblical mindset such as chapels, devotional Bible reading, curriculum, and a solid scope and sequence. I have found Bible reading, psalm singing, and the memorization of Proverbs of particular benefit in developing a literacy, legacy, and worldview in both schools and students.



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