

Education and Foolishness

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We do not know what to think about education, especially biblical and ministerial training. Every person is a theologian; many are self proclaimed Bible 'experts'. Some Bible 'experts' have never read the Bible through. Others read the entire Bible infrequently. Add a good dose of Spirit-driven teaching and preaching, and biblical training and education have little value. Our value system is upside-down. Incredibly, I still hear many comments and even sermons that belittle study, academic pursuits, and learning. Many of these are references to advanced learning and collegiate or graduate ministry training.

On the surface, it appears the church is still "for" education--we maintain our Bible schools and Bible classes. On the other hand, maybe we as a people are "against" education since barely 50% of the members in the average congregation participate in Bible education through the Bible classes! Have we come to value ignorance over knowledge? Do we want some truth but not all truth? Do we want "our" truth? Do we study to reinforce what we already know? Does intelligence or knowledge automatically move one away from God? Does education necessarily imply that one ceases to depend on God, substituting one's personal ability or reasoning? That there are potential dangers in education does not deny its value. If one could choose between education and not being educated, why would one choose to be uneducated?

The Bible never says that the wise or educated man cannot see God. Paul says education is not the basis for one's calling from God (1 Corinthians 1). We read too much into the passage if we conclude that education disqualifies one from being called by God. The man who penned these words was a man educated in the Jewish traditions at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the best known Jewish teachers of the day, prior to being called by God.

If we do not value education, do we unwittingly value ignorance? In Romans 3, Paul cites an Old Testament text, "The fool has said in his heart there is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Education and foolishness are not mutually exclusive. Remember the phrase, "educated fool". Why does the fool deny God?

- He cannot see him; he does not want to see him.
- He is too foolish to see him.
- He is too smart to see him.
- He is looking in the wrong place.
- God is higher than he is—higher ways and higher thoughts.
- He is looking for the wrong kind of God, even as Israel did.

Some educated people are fools. Some uneducated people are fools. Our task is to understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:15-17).