

The practice of building up the people of God with the knowledge of the Word of God, verbally and in written form, was ordained to Moses by God Himself. God spoke unto Moses, revealing His standard principles for a perpetual relationship with Himself and one another through the generations. Moses, in turn, spoke to the Israelites reporting everything God had revealed to him on their behalves. To authenticate the veracity of God's Word as spoken to Moses, and to document for future generations God's direct ordinances as given unto Moses—God wrote His Words and transmitted them to Moses on two tablets of stone as recorded in the book of Exodus and Deuteronomy:

And when He had finished spoken with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God... And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10).

Here, God's standard for educating His people and equipping future generations rests on two cardinal principles or traditions: The spoken and written forms of His Word. This truth is further emphasized in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the great text of the Shema:

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; ⁷ and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ "And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Therefore, the individual task of believers who have identified with God to serve Him is to also attach themselves to God's written Word, in order to meditate upon them and put them into practice daily. In Leviticus 18:5, God sternly warned the children of Israel: "So you shall keep my statutes and my judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD." Furthermore, God required this practice of His servant Joshua saying: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Joshua 1:8). There lay the foundation for successful Christian education. It is done through continual hearing, writing, reading, and living application of the Word of God in daily life. The Psalmist provides a wonderful glimpse into the blessed reality of prosperity for the believer through God's applied Truth:

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)

In the original texts, the word translated law is *Torah* in Hebrew and *Logos* in Greek. But, in Hebrew, *Torah* is also used for "direction," "instructions," and "teachings." The Torah is thus an educational system in Himself for those seeking the right path to God, Truth, and Life, (see John 1:1-4).



Consequently, believers' spiritual, physical, psychological, and intellectual prosperity in God is closely associated with their intimate fellowship daily with His Word. This practice is ordained as a personal experience throughout their generations. In this same understanding and tradition the ministry of the Prophets, who were sent to the people of Israel and their Kings, have been recorded to remind God's people of the consequences for their failure to abide by God's revealed ordinances: to love Him (the Word) alone, to walk in the light of His *Torah* and to put into practice His revealed Truth and Righteousness with one another. The Chronicled ministry of Israel's Kings highlighted whether they did that which was good, bad, or worse in the sight of God, in light of His revealed will in the *Torah*.

Thus, the practice of God's revealed will is what God expects of every man, woman, and child whose hope is for eternal life with Him. Jesus Christ, the other Prophet like Moses, the incarnate Word of God came to do God's will— thereby giving life to all people in the process. The aim of Christian education therefore, is to bring every believer to conformity to God's known will—Christ likeness. Christ introduced His ministry in Israel using a re-education process through the Sermon on the Mount, revealing the foundational application of the law and the prophets in their original intent. The life, the person, and the work of Christ teach the core principles for godly living and set an antecedent for faithful Church ministry: To love God's Law or will more than anything, and to love others, like Christ, even to the point of self-sacrifice. As such, the Word of God is to be incarnated in every process of true apostleship and discipleship.

Christ's Apostles have selflessly adopted Christ's paradigm of discipleship: Proclaiming new life through Christ, the incarnate Word of God; and educating new believers about the finished Work of Christ, His mission and His doctrines. This model was implemented at Ephesus where the Apostle Paul spent three years consecutively building up this community of believers in foundational Christian doctrines. Amazingly, the early disciples of Christ in the Church, when gathered together in true "*Koinonia*" or fellowship; they are strengthened in the faith through the ministry of teaching and proclamation of the Word—"*Kerygma*," and true "*Diakonia*": ministry of "*Shalom*" onto one another—and newborn believers are discipled for faithful Christian living according to the teachings and life of Christ. Thus, they are in-grafted and built up in Christ body—the Word—and are sent out to live Christ-like lives in the family setting—the educational paradigm of Deuteronomy 6:7. Dr. Lawrence O. Richards, Professor of Christian Education at Wheaton College's Graduate School, agreed:

Christian education must concern itself with the Body, for discipling is a ministry of the community as well as a ministry for individuals with special "teaching" gifts. To develop a ministering Body, involvement of each member as a believer-priest is essential. Leaders are called by God to set the tone, and to bring members into a ministering relationship with each other. Once we grasp the purpose and servant character of spiritual leadership, we can clearly see the pastor as and "educator." In fact, we see him as the primary educator in the contemporary local church.¹

Thus, ideally we understand formal Christian education encompasses three principal levels of achievement for the benefit of the Body:

¹ Richards, Lawrence O. *A Theology of Christian Education*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1976, 138.



- Perpetual reading of Scripture by all believers in Christ Jesus in order to live out lives that are permeated by God’s Truth in the Christian home, in Church fellowship, and in the world according to what is written. (Deuteronomy 6:7; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; Matthew 7:24; John 13:17; James 1:22-25);
- Perpetual formal exposition of Scripture by matured Christian believers who have been faithfully trained in the art of Biblical interpretation and application of Christian doctrines. This practice can be done through a formal or informal schooling process—yet, with well intentioned and fully recognized credible Bible teachers under faithful leadership & authority. The school of Tyrannus in Acts 19:9 is an applicable example;
- Perpetual formal seminary training for all those who pursue or maintain leadership and eldership positions in a community of Christian believers. The purpose is so that they may effectively execute the office of overseers “handling accurately the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) This requires that one has received faithful instructions and ministerial mentoring from others who have dedicated their lifetime in walking with God and serving Him through an academic life devoted in the study of the Word. The school of Gamaliel spoken of in Acts 5:34 and Acts 22:3 is an applicable example.

Obviously, the Church, in every generation, in order to ensure that God’s Word is being proclaimed in all righteousness and not for selfish gain, must seek to faithfully equip men and women and children through a discipleship process, following the same paradigm established by Christ and His Apostles: Call believers... Teach believers... Equip believers... Release believers into the world. Thereby, advancing Christ’s kingdom in every generation and in every sphere of life so that God may be glorified forever more. Toward that end formal Christian education is indispensable and is likewise required at three levels:

- Formal seminary training and advanced studies for those seeking to serve professionally in academic ministerial preparation of Church clergy, and others in various field Christian ministry.
- Formal Bible College Training for those seeking to serve under established local church leadership and eldership for faithful ministry of Christian education at appointed levels of local church ministry.
- Formal Bible institute training for those seeking to serve under established local church leadership for better ministry of discipleship at appointed entry level of local church ministry, and/or to lead effectively family devotionals and group bible studies.

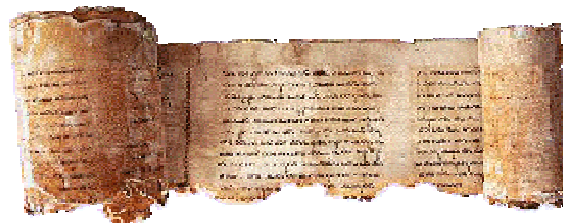


At the core of this fundamental pursuit of preparedness in theological education is the need to effectively educate all Christian believers in the fullness of knowledge of God’s Word for faithful living. Essentially, the principle here is to perpetuate the educational ministry of the Church in a way that new generation of Christians can live faithful lives in relationship to God and society, and become more excellent apologists of the faith by their lifestyles. Dr. Richards, which was quoted earlier, concurred:

We need to train men* to be models. We need to train men who will lead as servants. We need to train men who understand how the body grows, and who can lead members of the Body to discover their identity as believer-priests. We need to train men who realize that the health of the body as a corporate entity is critical in fulfilling the Church’s transforming mission – men who know how to build people together into a unity that reflects the unity we actually enjoy in Christ. If the seminaries of today will not be responsive and provide this kind of training, then God will raise up something new, and through it Christ will continue to build his Church²

This concept provides the basis for the establishment of authentic and enduring educational ministry in the local church—a concept fully embraced by RGEM International. We envision the implementation of every necessary level of training in order to fully equip the Body of Christ for faithful ministry to one another and to the next generation. Education for the Body of Christ is life... life that is enmeshed with His Word. As it is written in Hosea 4:6: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

Let the Church of Jesus Christ in the 21st century rise as one people to advance Christ’s kingdom in every sphere of life by sharing with one another the fragrant knowledge of God’s Word—as faithful servants of His word.



Thy Word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.
Psalm 119:11, NASB**³

² IBID, 163.

*RGEM International believes that both men & women in the Church of Jesus Christ enjoy the same privileges and responsibility to lead & educate others—in conformity to their respective gifts and calling in the Body of Christ.

^{3**} All scripture quotes in this presentation are from the NASB version of the Bible, unless otherwise indicated.

