



Clanking Chains: “Instruction” in Proverbs & New Testament; Parental Responsibilities in Education: Etymology of “Paideuo”

Proverbs 12:1 - Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

Proverbs 13:1 - A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer [לִיָּס] does not listen to rebuke.

Harris, R. Laird (ed.). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:479:

The scorners may be described as proud and haughty (Proverbs 21:24), incorrigible (Proverbs 9:7), resistant to all reproof (Proverbs 9:8; 15:12), and hating any rebuke (Proverbs 13:1). Wisdom and knowledge easily elude him (Proverbs 14:6).

One good way to remove contention from a group is to eject the scorner:

Proverbs 22:10 - Drive out the scoffer and contention will go out, even strife and dishonor will cease.

A prepared judgment awaits all scorners (Proverbs 19:29) for their trademark in life is “to delight” in their scoring (Proverbs 1:22). They shall be brought to nothing and consumed (Isaiah 29:20).

Proverbs 13:18 - Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline but he who regards reproof will be honored.

Proverbs 15:5 - A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is prudent.

v. 10 - Stern discipline is for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof will die.

Proverbs 15:32 - He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

v. 33 - The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor comes humility.

Proverbs 23:13 - Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die.

The Bible is crystal clear about the absolute necessity for parents to discipline, direct, suggest, train, and instruct their children about basic morality, abstinence from sin, compliance with biblical mandates, and orientation to community standards. The classic directive to parents on this subject is:

Deuteronomy 6:4 - “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

v. 5 - “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

v. 6 - “And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart;

v. 7 - and you shall teach them diligently [שָׁנַן] **shanan: to sharpen; to instruct with repetition**] 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.”



Neill however believes that none of this instruction is necessary since he believes that a child is a “good, not an evil, being.” Such an assumption precludes the fact that children are born with a sinful nature with trends toward sin, human good, and evil.

Children may not be born “evil” but they are potentially so since they most certainly are not “good.” Romans confirms that each and every one of us was condemned at physical birth and enter life in unbeliever status. This condition remains until and unless each individual believes in Christ for salvation:

Romans 3:10 - “There is none righteous, not even one;

v. 11 - There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God;

v. 12 - All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”

v. 13 - “Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving.” “The poison of asps is under their lips”;

Romans 3:23 - For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The New Testament word for the training of children is found in a number of passages. Some are directed to actual children while others are directed to those in spiritual childhood.

1 Corinthians 4:14 - I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

v. 15 - For if you were to have countless tutors [*παιδαγωγός, paidagōgos*: **a guide, or trainer of boys; child-leader, tutor**] in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for I in Christ Jesus became your father through the gospel.

v. 16 - I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.

The word *παιδαγωγός, paidagōgos* refers to a trainer of children who functions under the supervision of the child’s father. The pedagogue in turn supervises the boy’s conduct. He was not a teacher for this duty fell under the authority of the father.

Paul is implying that others may have instructed the Corinthians in the doctrines of Christ but he was their father in that regard. He then in verse 17 assigns Timothy, a pastor-teacher, to carry on his ministry in Paul’s absence.

The word *παιδαγωγός, paidagōgos* introduces us to the subjects of instruction, training, discipline, and correction of children by teachers. These teachers can be the child’s father or those assigned the duty such as the pedagogues.

A. S. Neill believed that children were to be “free to be themselves,” that they were “innately wise and realistic,” that “left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind he will develop as far as he is capable of developing,” and that in order to insure these things Summerhill School “had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction.”

This approach is obviously motivated by the doctrines of demons. It comes in direct opposition to the teachings of Scripture, it targets the most easily influenced of a society, and thus becomes an assault not only on the family but also the culture of the West, Christian theology, and client nation America.



What now becomes helpful is an analysis of the word group in which **παιδαγωγός, paidagōgos** is found. Its etymology will reveal the meaning behind a number of verses in the New Testament that mandate the instruction of children into the culture of his ancestors.

Here are four words we will note in this word group. In addition to **παιδαγωγός, paidagōgos** there is the verb:

παιδεύω, paideuō - to educate and instruct children; to instruct by admonition; to chastise. The noun:

παιδεία, paideia - education, instruction, discipline, correction, and chastisement of children. The purpose is to pass the culture down to the next generation. The noun:

παιδευτής, paideutēs - An instructor or teacher of boys; one who disciplines, corrects, chastens.

The background on this word group is provided by:

Friedrich, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 5:596-604:

παιδεύω, paideuō.

A. The Orientation of the Concept in the Greek World.

Sophocles uses **παιδεύω, paideuō** generally for the influencing of belief and conduct (*Ajax*, 595; *Oedipus Coloneus*, 562, 919; *Trachiniae* [Τραχινίαι], 451). Personal education, whose aim is the good man, fits in with general education, since it makes no difference whether one or many are educated by written or unwritten laws. The father's authority is even greater than the lawgiver's, for it is grounded in blood relationship and parental concern. The cultured soul brings happiness to itself and to the man to whom it belongs.

The work of the farmer is an illustration of *paideia*. The natural ability of the child is like the earth waiting to receive the seed; the teacher is like the farmer; his words of admonition and instruction are like the seed. Attainment of virtue rests on custom, culture, integrity, and life training. The first step in pedagogy relates to the rearing, the care and support of the child. Fathers themselves must be more concerned about education, for poor education leads to irregular living and baser diversions. Spiritual love of young people promotes education, develops talents of leadership, and fashions essential virtue. Everything depends on a good example; fathers must not be teachers of wrongdoing to their children. *Paideuō* is often used in the general sense "to cultivate" or "to instruct."

At issue in *paideia* is the relation of man to the *polis*. The aim and purpose of education is integration of the child into the surrounding world as this is determined by law and experience. The law itself is an educator. From birth the laws order the education of the child, as of adults, both physically and mentally. The Greeks are distinguished by their culture from barbarians, who are without *paideia* and every other impulsion to virtue. Children should be as little without integrity and instruction as sheep without shepherds or slaves without masters. It seems to be a political necessity that public behavior and the culture imparted to the young should be subject to strict pedagogical and ethical control. Man's happiness is dependent on instruction and integrity. Natural disposition and educational training bring about the moderation and restriction of desires. Culture also requires personal commitment.

Compare this commentary on how to train children and lead them to a happy disposition with the approach used by A. S. Neill and his associates at Summerhill School:



Neill, A. S. *Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood*. Edited by Albert Lamb. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1992), 117:

Religion says: 'Be good and you will be happy', but the adage is truer the other way round: 'Be happy and you will be good.' Forty-five years of Summerhill has convinced me that the latter version is the true one. Happiness is the right of all children, and it is evil to give them a hard life in order to prepare them for a life that may not contain much to make them happy. For too many parents still believe that a child is born in sin and has no right to happiness, only to mercy—when it repents. One cannot be bound and happy at the same time. The necessity for a child's happiness should be the first tenet of all educational systems. A school should be judged by the faces of its pupils, not by its academic successes.