



## Ten Ways to Harden a Child's Heart toward God

### Introduction

During the past several years, we have written dozens of articles about education and family. Some of them have been difficult to write as we endeavor to express truth in a gracious way. This particular article has proven to be the most challenging yet. It contains valuable information that we believe parents everywhere must consider. However, it also confronts the Christian parent with Biblical facts that may bring conviction, irritation, or even anger.

In admonishing a Christian brother over the harshness of his words, Pastor John Piper once suggested that the brother say the truth that needed to be said, but to say it with tears running down his face. I assure you that this writing is not done with the spirit of a self-righteous, judgmental heart. What is written is written with tears.

### Ten Ways to Harden a Child's Heart Toward God

Today's church leaders are struggling to find the answer to an alarming problem that is continuing to grow: the overwhelming majority (some studies report as high as 80%) of our churchgoing children are turning their back on the church as soon as they are old enough to leave home.

How can this be? What can the church do

to reverse this trend that is producing an ever shrinking faithful body of believers in America?

The answer is right in front of us: they are being taught to think in ways that will drive them away from Christian thinking.

Where? It is happening five days a

week, for more than seven hours a day in the place that 95% of Americans send their children- the public schools and the non Christian private schools.

Is it possible that parents might unwittingly expose their children to an environment that would increase the likelihood that their children would never love and obey God? Can

parents put their children in situations that would actually harden their child's heart against God? We fearfully answer, "yes."

Christian parents must realize that two hours in a Sunday morning church service or a Wednesday night youth group meeting can not conquer the effects of thirty five hours per week of teaching that is void of Christ as the explicit center of every subject, curriculum, lesson, and concluding application for life thinking.

Let us be clear that this is not an attack on Christian teachers in the non Christian school. Lord willing, God will use Christian teachers in every school to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. This should not be perceived as an attack on non Christian schools. It is not. What we are doing

here is pointing out 10 facts about the philosophy of the non Christian school and the Biblical consequences that follow. Some of these things may be hard to hear, but we plead with you to open your mind and carefully think through these points.

Now let's begin our analysis of the issue by first getting a Biblical perspective from God about children.

### Children are a gift from God.

Psalm 127:3 *Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.*

### Parents have a great responsibility to train children to love and obey God.

Deuteronomy 6:7 *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.*

Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

### The minds and the hearts of children are tender.

Jesus used them as an example:

Matthew 18:4 *Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

### Children must not be discouraged from coming to Jesus, be confused by others, or led to stumble in their faith.

Matthew 19:14 *But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from*



from tender seedling...



coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Luke 17:2 *It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.*

The words of God are clear in their emphasis and meaning. Parents are to teach children that God is to be the center of everything in a child's life. They are to faithfully expose the child's mind and heart to the things that God uses to draw a person to Jesus Christ and an eternal relationship with God. However, parents can do something that may actually harden a child's heart against God: expose their child to the teachings of a non Christian school for seven hours a day, five days a week. The list below cites ten ways that the non Christian school does exactly what God commands Christians not to do.

We need to take a minute to define this term, "hardening." The Bible teaches that there is no neutral ground or actions—everything is either for or against Christ (Matthew 12:30), and there are things that soften the heart of a child and things that harden the heart of a child. For example, teaching that God does not exist from the very earliest years of a child's life will have a hardening effect on the heart of a person and create a thought process that will make it more difficult to believe that there is a God later in life. Conversely, being taught that there is a God from a child's earliest years will prepare the heart and mind of the child to believe that God exists later in life. This is why God commands parents to immerse their children in His word and how He



normally brings a person to saving faith. Additionally, God tells us that what goes in through the eyes and ears will affect a person (Luke 11:34). He tells us (including the children) what we should be thinking about in Philippians 4:8 –

*“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”*

However, I want to be quick to state that although God usually works through faithful teaching about Him (Romans 10:17), He is not limited to or dependent on the teachings of men.

Here then, are *Ten Ways to Harden a Child's Heart Toward God*, by educating the child in a non Christian school:

### 1.

A non Christian school teaches children that they can find or create truth apart from the Bible because the school does not teach that absolute truth exists (the Bible). This is a devastating way for a child to begin to think and prepares his mind to reject the absolute truths presented in the Bible. We are commanded to align ourselves with the truth of God, not create our own (Romans 12:2).

### 2.

A non Christian school teaches a system that tells children that their work is very good even when it is very bad. This is the great "self esteem" movement that trades the truth of how well the student is really learning for the goal of not making any student feel badly. This has two terrible ends. First,

it sets up a child to be shocked when college or the job world introduces him to the reality of standards with consequences. Second and more important, the human mind needs to be introduced to standards which cannot be watered down so that when he hears the immutable demands of God (The Ten Commandments), he will realize that he cannot meet the standard and cry out for a Savior. (Romans 3:20-24, Galatians 3:24-25).

### 3.

A non Christian school teaches that all gods are equal. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, are taught as personal expressions of faith, all legitimate for whomever chooses to believe in them, and cannot be criticized or questioned. This lays the groundwork for a child to accept the false teaching that everybody's god is OK and does not draw the line in the sand that Jesus Himself drew in John 14:6. Jesus said to him, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."* Furthermore, it opens the door for the child to possibly consider believing one of those false religions in the future.

### 4.

A non Christian school teaches children while excluding the Bible. Education fundamentally is about learning to think and thinking informs a person's actions. From God's Word we find that all truth and therefore, all true education, is rooted

in the truth of God. By excluding the teachings of Christ in the non Christian school, the child implicitly learns that it is not important to have God as central to how we are to think and live.

### 5.

A non Christian school teaches that God is





relegated to Sunday only. Because the Christian God (the only true God!) is banned from the non Christian school, the child is taught that it is acceptable and normal to relegate God to Sundays or some specific time of the day or week. The result is the “casual Christian” - thinking that sets up a dual life mentality toward Christianity. That is, there are only certain times that a person should behave like a Christian because there are only certain times or places that God is to be honored. (2 Chronicles 29:11)

**6.** A non Christian school teaches that evolution is true. This is especially fascinating to young boys because of their love of dinosaurs. This teaching rejects the truth of a Creator and often creates an environment that ridicules a child who may question evolution as fact. No child wants to sound like a fool among his peers or his teacher. Undermining the Creator and confusing the child has the effect of casting doubt and disbelief in the first 11 chapters of the Bible. Because the remainder of the Bible stands on the foundational truths of the book of Genesis, casting doubt on the first 11 chapters undermines the validity of the entire Bible (2 Timothy 3:16).

**7.** A non Christian school teaches without Christ and leads children to conclude that man can effectively learn and grow independent of God. “If God is not needed for everything, He may not be needed for anything.” A Christian school teaches that we can, in fact, do all things, but it is through Christ. Therefore, both the responsibility to achieve a level of

independence in society and the blessing of total dependence on God is missed in the non Christian school.

**8.** A non Christian school teaches that there is no Divine Authority.

Without God as the Supreme Authority over all of life and the source of truth, the framework for a pattern of thinking is in place that concludes man is the supreme authority in life. How difficult will it be to believe and submit to God? Even if the gospel is believed, the child may believe that God exists to serve man’s need, not the other way around.

**9.** By banning Biblical teaching in the non Christian school, children are implicitly taught that God does not need to be worshipped daily through their thoughts, words, deeds, prayers and song. It also teaches that there is no need to thank God for His daily mercies. This teaches that there is apparently no demand from God that all things be done to honor and glorify Him.

**10.** A non Christian school teaches that a person can reach a level of goodness based on their good deeds. Being a nice person to others and nature, having certain character traits, and achieving certain goals or accomplishments will make a person happy, wise, and good. Although those things are desired in all people, they do not lay the groundwork to accept the truth that all of our good works are as filthy rags to God and in light of God’s holy laws, no one is good, no, not one. This anti Biblical teaching builds a subtle framework for legalism and works righteousness- a deadly thought process that draws hearts away from the message of the Cross. That is, a

person finds true goodness and joy before God when he becomes totally reliant on Someone other than himself- Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:12, Galatians 5, Romans 3:23)

## Conclusion

What a child is exposed to- Christian or non Christian- will have an effect on the mind and heart. The effect will either soften or harden his heart toward God. As parents seek to prepare their children for college, they must realize that the foundation of a child’s worldview is built during the first 13 years of their school life. Students with strong Christian identities are ready to continue their education at the college or university of their choice. However, those that have been immersed in educational settings that ignore or deny God are ripe for the atheistic agendas of liberal professors. From the Scripture above and the “Ten Ways” listed, we hope you will acknowledge the devastating, hardening effects of the non Christian school on our children and if possible, place your child in an environment where he can hear the truths of God every day.



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