

## From Our Pastor

### September 1, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

All across the nation schools are open and students are returning to classes. Ever since 2010, when "common core" was forced on public schools across the nation, teachers have been "teaching to the test"--in other words focusing on the math and reading skills that are tested at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade levels. As with all well intentioned government programs, there have been significant downside consequences, some predicted, some not.

While the functional education levels in the country have either declined or stayed at fairly low test scores in the past ten years, and subjects such as geography, science, and art are neglected, to me the most regrettable result has been a near shutdown of teaching history. As the New York Post reported earlier this year, "Don't know much about history..." goes the famous song. It's an apt motto for the Common Core's elementary school curriculum." The neglect of this vital subject begins early and continues into college. A 2014 report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that an abysmal 18 percent of American high school kids were proficient in US history. When colleges such as Stanford decline to require Western Civilization classes or high schools propose changing their curriculum so that history is taught only from 1877 onward (this happened in North Carolina), parents should be very concerned, but apparently, they are not.

A 2012 story in Perspectives on History magazine by University of North Carolina professor Bruce VanSledright found that 88 percent of elementary school teachers considered teaching history a low priority. The reasons are varied. His research found that teachers didn't focus on history because students aren't tested on it at the state level. Why teach something you can't test? There is also an understood resentment of history as a result of the "political correctness" dominance in our society. As one illustration, there are growing pressures to remove statues of Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers, while in Seattle the large statue of Vladimir Lenin (who is listed as one of the three worst mass murderers in history) seems to gather no opposition.

A knowledge of history is vital to maintaining a society. Our Creator tells us to study history. Deuteronomy 4:9 states: "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." He is telling them to remember what He had done for them and then to teach those things to future generations. The same command is repeated in other places. In chapter 11 of Deuteronomy, the Lord tells the people all the great things He will do for them, but there is a qualification. That qualification is that they do not forget His laws and what He has done for them. They are to pass it on to their children. God says you had better make sure this history is taught and not forgotten.

God's word contains many vivid and colorful accounts of men and women of faith. Children love to have stories such as Daniel in the Lion's Den, Ruth, and the Plagues in Egypt read to them time and time again. Hebrews 11 recounts the lives of faithful men and women whose examples we are to follow. Jude 3 tells us to "contend for the faith once delivered."

We can learn many things from those who came before us. The great philosophers of Greece, the ingenious governors and builders of Rome, and the founding fathers of this greatest ever of nations have bequeathed to us their wisdom and experience, if we will only study and learn from them. If we remember what God has done for us and for those who have trodden the Christian path before us, our faith will be strengthened, and our courage increased. If we forget our God and the history He inspired to be written for us, we will have little faith and will fall into sin.

God is concerned about the children who live in our time. In fact, the book of Malachi ends with these words, "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4: 4- 6)

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