

What will they do *without it?*

by Marsha Boyd-Mitchell

"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"
Mark 8:36, NIV

When I was 16, I graduated from high school. I had completed 12 years of Christian school from K–12. My primary schooling was at a school started by a pastor who believed that children should be educated in biblical truth throughout the school day. During the pandemic lockdown, many former classmates from my Christian school days began sharing stories of special things we remembered from that time. We talked about teachers, exceptional chapel speakers, and past competitions. You know how those conversations about “the good old days” go. There was some comfort there for us in remembering the things we were taught, and I saw some enter the conversation who were being called back to the faith that we had learned

about in those formative years.

I left high school with a call on my life to go to a Bible college and prepare to work in Christian education. I had lots of encouragement and support. However, I do remember a few adults saying to me, “What will you do with that education?” As it turned out, I went into the field of Christian schooling and Christian education in the life of the church. In my years of mentoring young people on to their next steps, I have seen some make the decision to go on to Bible schools and Christian colleges or universities, and sometimes they also hear the question, “What will you do with that education?” There are

times when this scrutiny comes from inside the church.

Our culture has high expectations for young people: get a great education, a good job, and create security for one’s self. Sometimes the journey into the Lord’s work, or even time set apart in growing in biblical things, is viewed as unnecessary. Some will ask the question, “What will you do with that?” I’ve ignored and dismissed this question more than a few times, but my middle-aged self begs for a new question to be asked: “What will they do without it?” Better yet, “What will we the Church do without it?”

I recently had the privilege to attend the wedding of two young people who have studied and are studying theology as formal education. I noticed their wedding was full of details that amplified faith. Married on a Sunday evening, they began Sunday morning with a family service of faith where they chose their favourite worship choruses. The groom brought a word from Scripture that was full of meaning about God’s plan for family and he added wonderful personal notes about their own two families.

Moving into the wedding, there were hymn arrangements sung, a meaningful sermon

given, and vows made to solidify the covenant. As the soloist sang after the vows, the couple had a private communion service with the pastor. I could not help but think how their education had informed their choices for this special day. My prayer for the couple is that their knowledge of biblical truths translates daily in their marriage.

These pandemic times have brought new meaning to the words “act of God.” If we’ve learned anything, I hope it is that security is an illusion in our minds and that the Creator of the universe is the one really in control. I hope we are looking at the young people in our congregations and homes and thinking about how we can best prepare them to abide in Christ in our post-COVID world.

Are there young people in our midst who would benefit from our encouragement to get involved in secondary or post-secondary Christian education? Or what new opportunities are we pursuing with our congregations and neighbourhoods to foster the spiritual formation of our youth? We don’t want to be guilty of preparing youth to make gains in the world without tethering their pursuits to the spiritual reality of their souls. What will we do without it?

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