

BOOK EXTRACT: CUTENESS IS NOT GOODNESS

These paragraphs are extracted from a section with this title in 'Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning' by Douglas Wilson.

The first appearance of sin and self-centredness in children often comes as a shock to Christian parents. ... Although bad companions certainly reinforce the sin in the heart, they are not the cause of it. It comes from Adam. It is easy to misunderstand this because of the natural affection we parents feel for our children and because children are cute.

The Biblical view of man (and his offspring) must affect our view of education. Christians must distinguish the natural from the spiritual and stop making surface judgments. For example, children are naturally curious. This curiosity is God-given, but it is not the same thing as a love for learning. ... If the child's natural curiosity is encouraged by a competent teacher, it will produce more than a superficial dabbling with knowledge. Children, like the ancient inhabitants of Athens, like to hear the latest thing (Acts 17:21). But they must be taught how to study a subject in depth and grow to rejoice in what they are learning.

One result of fallenness seen in children is the aversion to work, and natural curiosity is not sufficient to overcome that aversion. ... Anyone who has ever endeavoured to get a child to clean his room understands that the disinclination to work is not limited to adults. This tendency toward laziness must be understood and checked. If laziness is tolerated in a school, whether in the teachers or students, then true education becomes impossible.

'One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys' (Proverbs 18:9). Not working is the same as destroying. ... For education to be successful, the student must be required to work. Because this requirement is not pleasant, the student must be motivated to work. But if the motivation is Biblical, it will not just be fear of negative consequences—there must be a balance between positive encouragement and discipline.

Those who state that laziness is one of the central problems in American education today are likely to be dismissed as harsh and insensitive. But if the work is not getting done, then *someone* is not doing it. The Japanese don't have thirty-six hour days; they do more than we do in twenty-four hours. Another way of saying this is that they work harder.

It is an old story that the failures in life are not the people who lack good intentions; they are those whose physical nature has not acquired the habit of prompt and involuntary obedience. The man who can make himself do what he wills has the world before him, and it rests with parents to give their children this self-compelling power as a mere matter of habit. (Charlotte Mason Vol. 3, page 20)