

Why Bother with Education?

Kids will typically offer one of two responses to that question adults like to ask: “What’s your favorite subject in school?”

- Recess
- Lunch



I was never that kid. It was not necessarily that I liked school, but I liked to read and learn.

- In third grade, the teacher had a chart with all our names and a star for every book we read. My row of stars was five times longer than everyone else’s.
- In the fourth grade, I think because of my penchant for reading, I was put in the “accelerated” class next year.
- I finished high school in three years, not because I was smarter, but I “worked the system” and got all my credits in. (I don’t know if that cheated my twin sister who, under normal circumstances, would’ve graduated before me—by ten seconds.)
- I have been compared to Sheldon Cooper from *The Big Bang Theory*, not because he is a genius or has an eidetic memory, but because of the habit of inserting random trivia into a conversation.

“Did you know the computer mouse was originally called the X-Y Position Indicator for a Display System?”

“No, and who cares?”

I don’t mention these things with any bravado. I just like to read and learn, but that doesn’t always translate into smarts. Good grief, I was *not* a good student. In fact, I was a pretty lousy student. I was on academic probation one semester in college. I didn’t get serious about good study habits until I got married and headed to seminary. (A good wife will do that.)

I determined I do not want to stop learning. Even today, I am actively reading four different books on four different subjects. I have two advanced degrees and a queue of books in my library still waiting to be read, yet I have to ask myself:

What do I gain from all this reading and education?

Even the incredibly smart and wise Solomon questioned the point of all his learning.

“Then I said to myself, ‘The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?’ I said to myself, ‘This too is meaningless’” (Eccl. 2:15).

Right before this, he acknowledged that wise people have some advantage over the foolish in this life—but what does that matter once this life is over?

The Gnostics were a heretical group that was a pain in the side of the early church. While there are many facets to their heretical views, let me highlight the one that is core to their name. The title Gnostic comes from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*. The key to being a Gnostic was having access to the “hidden knowledge.” They tied salvation to possessing this deeper, mystical, esoteric knowledge. It was a prideful mentality that made them look down on others. “We’re special; we know the secret.”

I’ve yet to find an exact definition of what this secret knowledge entails (to which a Gnostic would condescendingly pat me on the head and say, “Ahh, bless your little heart”). Different Gnostics emphasized different things. Yet nowhere in the New Testament is credence given to the notion of “inside knowledge.” The apostle Paul was incredibly brilliant, but he said, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

In the end that’s the only knowledge that matters.

Go ahead and get an education. Learn—and keep learning. Improve your mind, but in the end, know this: what matters in both this life and for eternity is your personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ. The wisest thing anyone can do has nothing to do with education or books. It has to do with trusting Jesus Christ and living under His lordship.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (1 Pet. 3:18).