

**TEACHING CHILDREN TO KNOW AND LOVE GOD BY KNOWING AND LOVING TRUTHS ABOUT GOD**  
Bruce A Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

- I. Introduction – Background to *Big Truths for Young Hearts*
- II. Teaching Children to Know and Love God by Knowing and Loving Theology
  - A. The Progression of Truth (i.e., “Traveling Truth”!) – Head, Heart, Hands, Habitat
    - The mind’s understanding (knowing the truth) is first in importance, and is necessary for the heart’s engagement with that truth (loving the truth). Knowing the truth provides the possibility and basis for loving the truth. E.g., Edwards’s illustration of fire
    - The heart’s engagement with truth (loving the truth) is necessary for the hand’s activity in applying that truth (living the truth). Loving the truth provides the possibility and basis for living the truth.
    - The hand’s applying the truth (living the truth) is what makes possible the transformation of others and our cultural environment (transformed by the truth)
    - The order is crucial: Head → Heart → Hands → Habitat  
Knowing → Loving → Living → Transforming
  - B. The Possession of Truth – Head, Heart, Hands, Habitat
    1. Head – Start with the priority of learning well the truth of God’s word
      - With children, the first priority in what we can assist them with is the “head” – knowing the truth. Since most younger children are not saved, the “heart” is not ready to be touched fully. And even when saved, some maturity and reflection is needed to begin to sense the weightiness of truth. Knowing the truth as fully and accurately is crucial all else.
      - Children are curious, by nature, and have many questions. Resist the urge to squelch this curiosity and questioning due to not knowing how to answer them.
      - Take them to the Bible, so they learn that the authority you have and they also should have is God’s word. Resist the urge to apply your parental authority in making them believe the truth. Help them, even as young children, to be like the Bereans who search the Scriptures to see if this is so.

2. Heart – Move eventually to the level of heart embrace of the truth
  - But in time, the “heart” becomes the key issue. Not only do they know the truth, but do they feel the weight and sense the personal significance of the truth
  - Pray fervently that God would work in their hearts and help them see not only the truthfulness of the truth but also the glory and wonder and beauty of the truth
  - Help them learn, at a young age, Thomas Chalmers’s principle of the “Expulsive Power of a New Affection”
3. Hands – Move to the level of truth’s effect on their hands, the application of God’s word
  - Help them with “hand”-s on application of the truth they learn and love. Help them think through various areas of their lives to see what these truths mean to how they live and relate to others. Don’t assume they’ll just “get it.” Get them started in thinking about how the truth of God’s word needs to be lived out.
  - Here, avoid legalism and moralism by helping them see the gospel at work in how they live
4. Habitat – Then help them see ways they can be used by God in transformation of their habitat, through their friendships and relationships, as well as service they can render
  - Do acts of service together, but help them see how these are outworkings of the truths of God’s word and empowered by the gospel
  - Give them freedom to dream and envision how they can be used by God in service to his kingdom

### III. Concluding Thoughts on Teaching by what is “Caught” along with what is “Taught”

- The principles of the “progression” and “possession” of truth we’ve considered are just as relevant for us as for our children. Do we seek to know, and love, and live, and transform?
- Do our children see in us a fervency and passion and love for truth they will want to emulate?