



Introduction to Classical Education

with Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lesson 5: The Major Elements of Classical Education

Outline:

Classical Christian Education (Dictionary style definition)

- CCE is a **traditional** approach to education rooted in western civilization and culture, developed by the church, grounded in piety and governed by theology, employing the historic **curriculum** and **pedagogy** of the seven **liberal arts** in order to cultivate men and women characterized by **wisdom, virtue, and eloquence**.
- CCE employs the seven **liberal arts** and the **great books** in order to **cultivate** men and women characterized by **wisdom, virtue and eloquence**.
- CCE employs the seven **liberal arts** and the **great books**.

Analogies to Classical Education

- Like a Museum
- Like a Cathedral
- Like a Garden
- Like a Table
- Like a Monastery (including all of the above analogies)
- Like a Tower
- Like Bees Gathering Honey
- Like a Road



Four Questions that Every Educational Approach Needs to Address

- **Who** is the student?
 - In the Christian tradition, human beings are created beings created in the image of their Creator.
 - We are able to know truth, goodness, and beauty.
 - We can make an ordered sense of this world.
 - A part of our anthropology is also that there is sin (a deep interior dislocation of the soul, Sayers). Redemption enables us to order our soul so that we can love the world that we find ourselves in.
 - We are to cultivate our affections to love the things that our lovely.
- **What** am I to teach the student?
- **Where**: In what community am I to teach the students?
- **Why**: To what end or purpose?



James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*

- Every pedagogy assumes an anthropology.
- In the Christian tradition:
 - We believe that we have **souls**.
 - We are enfleshed souls, we have bodies. We are not disembodied minds.
 - To have a soul is to apprehend truth, goodness, and beauty. Our souls are crying out to God, where we find meaning through connection.
 - We have to recover the idea of our five senses being a profound part of how we make our way around the world. These bodies are how we mediate truth, goodness, and beauty.
 - What should the rhythms, practices, and routines be that embody the ideals that we confess?
 - We should be seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting what our ideals are.
 - An **embodied** soul is meant to contemplate, in a restful state, that which is true, good, and beautiful.
 - **Scholé** is undistracted time to study the things that are most worthwhile, often in a beautiful place with your good friends, and often with good food and drink.
 - There is not a lot of scholé in our modern schools.

What do we teach human beings?

- We want human beings to acquire full capacitation and maturity of our human abilities (to think, to build, to create, to measure, to sing, etc.).
- The course of studies we take to cultivate our human capabilities are the **seven liberal arts**.
 - The liberal arts are rooted in creation theology.
 - The arts help us to make things.
 - They are called liberal because they free us.
 - These arts enable us to access wisdom that has come down to us in the Great Books. We want the very best.
- There is a **pedagogy** associated with the liberal arts and the Great Books.
 - Our predecessors have figured out how to teach.
 - For young children, singing and chanting is a valuable pedagogy.
 - Socratic discussion is a common pedagogy in the upper school.

Where do we teach?

- We teach in **community (Paideia)**.
 - What is goodness? How do we cultivate their souls? How do they acquire virtue? How do they acquire wisdom? This happens in community.
 - A warm community of love is necessary for the curriculum to do its work.



- Love must cover and lead everything that we do. Everything we do should be in Christian love.
- If we teach logic well without also imparting love, we are in danger of creating more clever devils (C.S. Lewis).
- Is your school or homeschool growing in a loving community? That is the rich soil for the curriculum.
- We have inherited practices and settings, it is **traditional**.
 - Tradition is the democracy of the dead (Chesterton).
 - We should look to the last 1000 years for how education was done.
- **Ecclesial** traditions merged with the educational traditions.
 - Formative liturgies come down to us in the church (James K.A. Smith).
 - We will find embodied practices that cultivate a love of the things that are lovely.
 - There are counter formative liturgies in culture that shape students. We need to counter those with the liturgies that come to us through the church.

Why do we do this?

- To cultivate the souls of human beings.
- There is no pat formula.
- This takes a community.
- We are seeking wisdom, virtue, and eloquence.
- We need to think with this end in mind.
- We are seeking a liberated mind that is able to learn any new discipline or vocation. It provides a liberated capacity to learn anything put before him or her (Sayers).
- A classical education ends with a human being filled with gratitude to serve.



