



The New Old Way Conference in Africa with Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lessons from America

Outline:

Repairing the Ruins of Classical Christian Education

- Something classical means something that is well ordered.
- Classical Christian education is the inheritance of the Church across the ages.
- The fragments of classical Christian education have remained.
- Our task now is to rebuild the ship, to bring the fragments together. The trouble is that we have not been trained as shipbuilders. We want to put the pearls back on the string.
- Every pedagogy assumes an anthropology (James K.A. Smith).
- Classical Christian education belongs to the church.

What is classical Christian education?

- We will always ask this question. This is an education that keeps asking the fundamental questions.
- Beginning in wonder, classical Christian education nurtures the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, spiritual, and physical capacities of students with the rich and ordered course of study grounded in the traditional seven liberal arts and leading through language literature, history, mathematics, natural sciences, fine arts, and philosophy. Premised on the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty and governed by the Lordship of Jesus Christ the Logos, classical education aspires to transmit our inherited ecclesiastical and cultural endowment of wisdom, virtue, and eloquence to successive generations thus cultivating virtuous neighbors and citizens.
- Classical Christian education is the transformed inheritance of the Greeks and Romans into the culture of the church that was developed by the church and extended to the world, grounded in piety and governed by theology, employing the historic curriculum of the seven liberal arts in order to cultivate men and women characterized by wisdom, virtue, and eloquence.
- Classical education is the pursuit of wisdom and virtue by means of the rich and ordered course of study grounded in the liberal arts tradition under the Lordship of Christ.
- Classical Christian education is the liberal arts and the Great Books.
- Jeremiah 6, this is the ancient path for the Church.

Temptations and Mistakes



- Truth
 - The beginning of the recovery (1980) was the period of recovery of truth. Do we believe that we can know and perceive truth?
 - We were concerned with bringing back the Trivium (Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric). These arts open up for us the greatest books ever written, including the Bible.
 - We began using songs and chants.
 - How can you give what you have not received? This is a dilemma. How can you teach in ways that you were not taught? How do we unlearn what 20 years of formation has resulted in?
- Goodness
 - After successfully importing the Trivium, we began to take note that many of our schools were quite dry and cold. We became serious about our mission and ourselves (this is pride).
 - Students were weighed down by our gravity. We put a great load on our students teaching them up to 10 subjects at a time, and gave them hours of homework at night.
 - Our schools were not **Good**.
 - Students cared about friendship and Christian love.
 - We started to repent. Love must always come first. Love must lead everything and be properly patterned.
 - Students needed to love the lovely.
 - Community is the rich soil in which the curriculum should be planted in order to grow.
 - We realized how important the cultivation of virtue was.
 - Constancy
 - Perseverance
 - Temperance
 - Fortitude
 - Courage
 - Humility
 - Love
 - Zeal for learning, truth, goodness, and beauty.
 - We teach students to have virtue by story, Scripture, the study of history, and by our own modelling as teachers.
 - Slowly our schools became warm and inviting, places of friendship and cheer.
 - We slowed down.
 - We taught fewer subjects.
 - We incorporated more music.
 - We brought church liturgies in.
 - We subverted modern grading practices.
- Beauty
 - Our schools were ugly. They were ugly because we didn't think that beauty was a relevant category.



- We decorated our schools in ways that were ugly.
- We did not have the eyes to see.
- Beauty is a category for all five senses – assembled, dined, conversed, greeted one another.
- Beauty was not about money, it could be created with simplicity and modesty.
- We began to beautify our schools with beautiful rich routines, rhythms and practices.
 - Music, art, routines, dress, getting into nature, brining nature in, hospitality, and refreshment

Fruit in the Recovery of classical Christian education

- Higher SAT scores for students who have been classical
- Most likely to trust the Bible as well science.
- They are most likely to care about the environment.
- They are most likely to have LGBT friends, but at the same time being the least to support their lifestyle.
- While 70-80% of Christians abandon the faith in their 20s, classical educated Christian students retain their faith at the rate of 80%.
- There was not a single recorded divorce among those surveyed who were graduates of classical Christian schools.

Lessons Learned

- If this is the best education for the few, this is the best education for all.
- We need to give this education away.
- This is a slow work, more like learning a new language than switching a brand. This is the culture of the church.
- This is a generational work.
- It blesses people every step of the way.
- If it is worth doing, it is worth doing poorly.
- Curriculum will not grow without a loving community.
- Students love the true, the good, and the beautiful. They long for friendship.
- We teach the way we were taught, and therefore we must be patient with ourselves.
- Rigor is often distorted into hard for hardness sake, and becomes rigor mortis.
- We teach too many subjects too poorly and ruin a student's standard.
- Many are classically minded but not classically trained.
- A classical education is no guarantee that every child will love Christ.
- People who don't love classical Christian education should not lead in our schools.
- We teach in silos because we were educated in silos.
- Not everything in progressive education is bad.
- The K-12 paradigm for referring to education is thin and shallow.
- We need colleges to collaborate to form a K-16 education.



- We need money and donors to help these schools start.
- Most pastors won't touch this in the United States. They don't make a stand for Christian education.

A few mistakes

- We have assumed that doing classical Christian education was like changing a brand, it is the long work of changing a culture.
- We assumed that it can be done quickly.
- We underestimated the time it would take for us to unlearn our own progressive teaching habits.
- We have been proud, defensive, brittle, and serious and unable to hear from our critics and learn from our mistakes.
- Sometimes we have been too slow to take this education to the urban poor.