

## What is Christian Education?

The primary goal of Christian education is to inspire a biblical world view in each student. Not only so they can defend and support their faith, but also so they can recognize falsehood in the world around them. The argument is used that Christian schools do not prepare children for the "real" world. The implication is that a Christian school does not prepare children to become like the rest of the world. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2 A truly Christian education will purposefully prepare children to be set apart from the world and not like it so they may be salt and light in the darkness of the "real" world.

Christian education will serve the student in three general areas.

1. **Curriculum:** to learn the facts, to do the math, to read the selection, and so on. An education that is truly Christian is taught from a biblical base so that students may respond more adequately to God through loving and serving Him.
2. **Life in Christ:** fellowship, character training, the bearing of one another's burdens, reaching the lost, spiritual disciplines.
3. **Love of God:** the most important thing a student learns, the love of God for him, and to love Him in return, is ultimately found on an individual basis. A Christian school should assist in that discovery. It can do no more and no less, for salvation cannot be forced.

Modern education strives after the first area but cannot even hope to address the other two. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these other things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

The foundation of a truly Christian education is built upon a Christian philosophy centered on God's Word.

## What is Classical Christian Education?

Classical Christian education is the fastest growing trend among Christian homeschools and day schools.

Classical education relies heavily upon the great thinkers and writers of the past. Languages of the past such as Greek or Latin, in which are found many of the roots of contemporary speech and thought, are studied. Classical education teaches each subject in relation to all other subjects so the student learns in each area amidst the backdrop of the bigger picture of God's redemptive plan for His people. It involves a three-stage process based on the developmental characteristics of children. This three-step process is intended to provide children with the tools of learning that will prepare them to go on to specialized fields of study and will equip them to learn and to think for the rest of their lives. Classical education establishes an unmistakable opportunity for poorer students to succeed and enables average and promising learners to make greater progress. This three-stage process is called the Trivium.

The stages of the **Trivium** are:

1. **The Grammar Stage** (grades 3-5) children are taught the rules and facts of each subject, including Latin (spelling, grammar, multiplication tables, etc.)
2. **The Dialectic Stage** (grades 6-8) - children are taught formal logic and learn to reason carefully. They learn to recognize valid and invalid argument from a biblical world view, making themselves less susceptible to manipulation and deception.
4. **The Rhetoric Stage** (grades 9-12) - students are trained to bring all their learning together into one whole and to articulate eloquence, both orally and through writing. The goal of a classical education is training the minds of children so that they are able to learn for themselves and be able to eloquently express what they have learned in a persuasive and gracious manner.

## What is a Classical School? by Douglas Wilson

Welcome to the first edition of *Classis* . . . Not surprisingly, the word *classis* is Latin, and it means a variety of things, including class, army, or division. However, the allusion we are seeking to call to mind is based on just one of its definitions, that of *fleet*. As an association of schools, we are a fleet of schools. We have banded together in order to encourage one another as we sail in the same direction – seeking a rigorous return to classical and Christian education. We *could* press the analogy and talk about how the government ships have been sinking, and how many of the private Christian ships are afloat, but are bobbing around directionless; but this would be to abuse and derange the metaphor, and would be taking exceeding liberties with your patience.

With the name *Classis*, we are stating our desire to encourage a return to an education grounded in the culture of the West. Such an education must be unabashedly Christian. The modern opium dream that education can be religiously neutral should be, in our minds, equivalent to the question of whether or not, to use Dabney’s phrase, “schoolrooms should be located under water or in dark caverns.” Neutrality about the ultimate questions can be *pretended* in education, but it cannot be accomplished. Therefore, all our schools confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over all.

But an education grounded in the culture of the West requires something else as well. To resort to a commonplace, when parents teach their children to speak, the language they teach is the language they themselves speak. In other words, the young are always educated by *their* elders. God has placed them in this particular cultural river; our children have no ability to flow in a different stream.

This principle is recognized clearly when we are talking about parents and their children – just one generation. But it applies, just as clearly, when we take our grandparents and ancestors into account, the birth of our Lord in the reign of Caesar Augustus, and before that to the covenant made with Abraham, and before that to the fall of our father Adam. *Education cannot be successfully detached from our cultural river, and turned into a small private pond.* If any such attempt is made, the result will be a poor cultural education, not a culturally neutral education.

This is not being said in a xenophobic way, or from any desire to react mindlessly to the modern trendiness of multiculturalism. If this duty of cultural education is neglected, the result will not be appreciation for other cultures, but rather a poor training in one’s own. With this association, we have come together in order to encourage each other in the pursuit of cultural excellence in the education of our children.

This means an education which is thoroughly and unabashedly Christian. Theology is the queen of sciences, and sound theology is the study of the triune God revealed in Scripture. It must be strongly emphasized that classical and Christian schools are *evangelical Christian* schools. We reject both the mindnumbing errors of theological liberalism, and the superficial inanities of a reactionary fundamentalism. It is very important that Christians realize that they do not have to choose between genuine learning and a love for Christ. The greatest commandment includes the requirement that we love the Lord our God with all our brains.

With regard to the curriculum, this approach means the necessary restoration of certain “lost” subjects to the curriculum of our schools, and a return to an older method or approach in the teaching of those subjects which remain. We are seeking a return to the study of Latin and Greek, the study of formal logic, and the study of rhetoric. We are seeking a return to the *Trivium*, a method of instruction that proceeds through *grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric*.

In doing this we are trying to establish an education system that equips leaders. In the daunting task of cultural restoration, which is what we face, it is crucial that we train our children to continue the work we have begun. And that is education.

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