

WHAT IS CCE?

The Goal of Classical Christian Education

The goal of Christian and classical education is to equip students to evaluate knowledge in the light of Scripture, achieve academic excellence, to be thoughtful, and glorify God. Classical Christian education develops in the student a desire to know God more and to share the love of God with others, not only in word but also in action. They develop a passion for seeking wisdom and knowledge, and have an intellectual foundation built on the tools of learning and utilize them in all walks of life. Skills are developed that promote students to courageously engage the culture to proclaim and express the love, grace and mercy of Jesus to a world that is broken. Discernment guides them as they look at the worldview of the surrounding culture and assess what lines up with Scripture, and clearly see the deceptions that do not. They are able to carefully consider an idea without blindly accepting it. Using knowledge, reason, and discernment, they are careful to ponder ideas in light of God's Word before accepting it as true. In this classical model, Christ is central in all aspects and the acquisition of knowledge is purposed in order to grow in wisdom and virtue.

Christ is Central

The truth of Scripture, and the very nature of God, is the basis of all knowledge and governs all that is taught. As Scripture is the ultimate authority for our lives, students and teachers alike should live in accordance to its teaching and use it to test all knowledge and experience. It is understood that there is a Truth and God is the revealer of this truth. Whether it is the Pythagorean theorem, the second law of thermodynamics, Latin conjunctions, or a Shakespearian sonnet, all truth, goodness, and beauty has its origination in God. Since God is the creator of all things, and all knowledge is interconnected, all subjects should be taught as part of an integrated whole.

The most important truth in the Bible is that Jesus came to reconcile us back to God. It is vital that all students have the opportunity to hear the Gospel proclaimed by their teachers. It needs to be abundantly clear that Jesus came to seek and save the lost – in other words, everyone. No matter what your past holds, salvation is yours by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and those who repent find a better way to live. Those already in a personal relationship with God are to be nurtured and brought up to know him better. Students should be encouraged to see that God has a purpose for their lives and following his instructions for their lives is the best way to go about fulfilling that purpose.

Simply knowing Truth without understanding the equal importance of experiencing and giving Grace would be incomplete. If our students are only about the truth and leave out grace we create pompous, elitist people that care more about being right and winning an argument rather than the wellbeing of their neighbors. A

classical Christian education should be available for all children regardless of their background, upbringing, or their economic status. We all have things in our lives that could disqualify us without the grace God gives us – we need to show that grace to others in the same way. Students and teachers should endeavor to look at others the same way Christ did. He saw more than the present circumstance, He saw their hearts and their needs. We should continually strive to see when and where grace is needed and extend it freely to others so they receive the truth. We all need both!

Classical Methodology

There are three distinct phases that people progress through naturally when learning any new idea or concept. These stages are the basis for the classical education method and approach learning by utilizing the God-given developmental design of a child. The three stages are grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

Younger students begin their education in the grammar stage, which consists of learning the fundamental rules of each subject. These are the basic facts of what needs to be learned: from phonics and spelling rules, to math facts and key historical events. Middle school students build on the knowledge gained in the grammar stage and discover the ordered relationships of the particulars in each subject. In this stage students learn how to think and reason by linking the fundamentals already learned in the grammar stage with new knowledge and the discovery of the relationships between the two. Finally, the students arrive at the rhetoric stage where they learn to clearly express what has been gleaned in the grammar and logic of each subject. In this final stage, students are able to clearly and effectively articulate their knowledge to others.

When students are young they thrive on rote memorization, songs, and chants. As they get older they use the memorized knowledge and basic skills learned to gain an understanding of the various relationships in their world. Their thoughts become more sophisticated as they try to find their place in their world by first figuring out who they are, which is more easily discovered if they know Whose they are. They progress from simply believing at face value what adults have told them is true, to figuring out why something is true, or why it is not, for themselves. A classical Christian education gives them the ability to do so in a safe, biblically-based environment. The world and culture are replete with lies meant to deceive these young people who are searching for answers. A classical and Christian school should be a place where students can ask questions, share their doubts, and work together with teachers and peers to arrive at the Truth, which now becomes truth for the student, not because someone told them to believe it as true, but because they have logically worked it through. For the rest of their lives, students will continue the process of determining what is true, good and beautiful since learning should never end. As students gain insight, they will want to share what they know. While in the logic stage students may be a bit argumentative in the way they convey their developing knowledge. Thankfully, in the rhetoric stage they learn to communicate the interrelated thoughts and concepts forming in their mind effectively and poignantly. This final stage builds on the first two. At this

point, students develop advanced writing and speaking skills to apply the rules of logic learned in middle school to the foundational information learned in the early grades vigorously, clearly, and with growing wisdom.

Education is accomplished best in a disciplined environment full of joy and love. There is great delight in learning something new, gaining new insights about what was learned previously and sharing that knowledge with others. The classroom should be peaceful and free from distractions. Students should respect the teacher, giving focused attention, maintaining self-control, listening well, and being eager to participate. Teachers are considerate of the pupils and maintain well-managed classrooms by not engaging in intimidation, harshness, or by demeaning the students. Teachers affirm what the students are doing well and when needed will move toward a student that is experiencing a time of weakness to lend the student strength, so the behavior will not inhibit the child's learning or the learning of others. When the atmosphere is free of distractions, teachers and students can be engaged in the rigorous business of learning with the students doing most of the work of the mind.

Students acquire the tools of learning in classical Christian education. Unlike earthly tools that wear with use, these tools become sharper and more effective each time they are utilized. These tools are not limited to school, but also apply in any endeavor they choose to undertake; whether it be a new job, hobby, sport, or in anything they seek to become proficient or accomplished. What is learned in elementary and secondary education forms the mind, body, and soul. Jesus, being well educated, grew in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and men. His education touched all areas of His life and our schools should strive to do the same. We are aiming our efforts to educate the whole child, not just limiting ourselves to the intellect alone. The purpose of education is not just to achieve good grades or get into a prestigious college. It is a life-long process that leads us to become virtuous and wise, and to an intimate relationship with Jesus, loving Him, and loving others.