

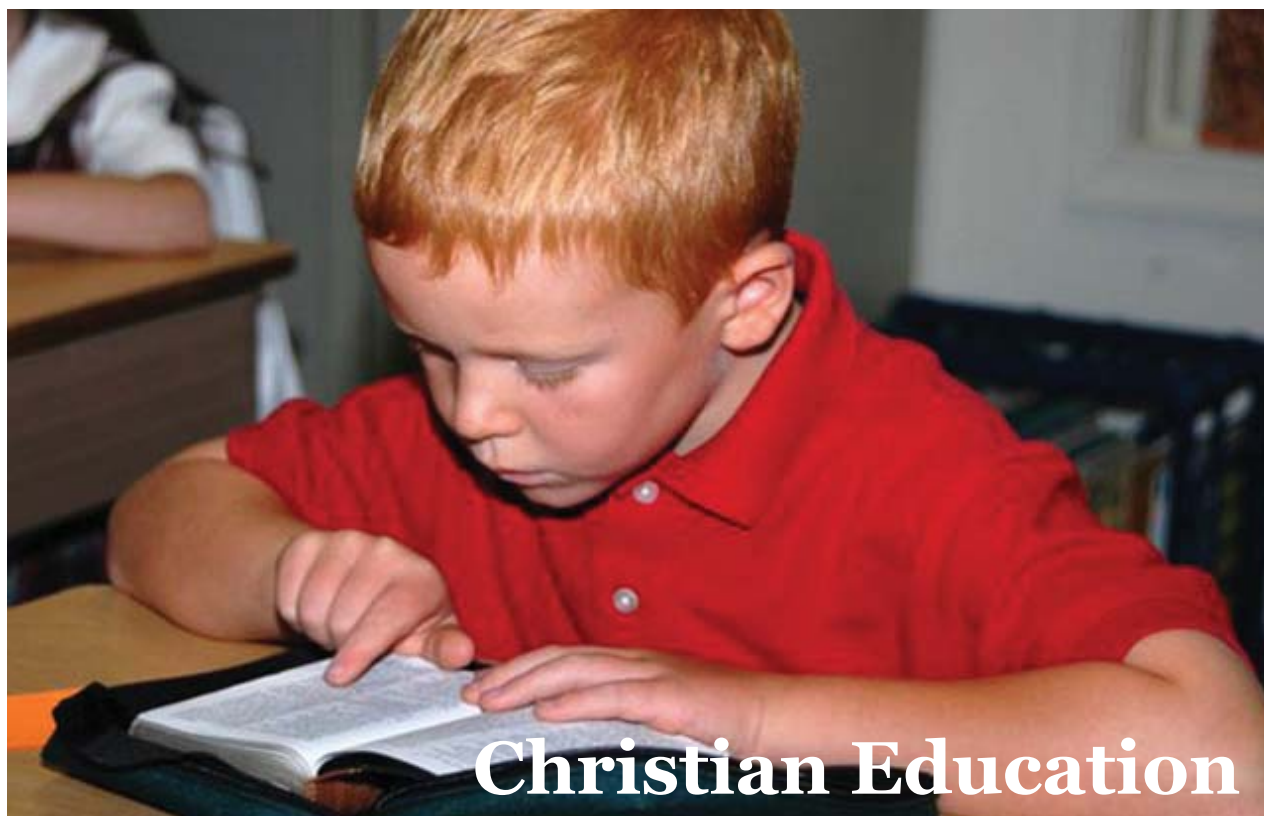
# CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO



# The Association of Classical & Christian Schools



## Christian Education

We address “Christian” first because we are first, and foremost, Christian schools. Our understanding of all things, including all things pertaining to education, is shaped by Christian truth. Thus, to acquire a sufficient understanding of classical education, one must first be able to view it from a Christian perspective.

The ACCS Confession of Faith defines the scope and elements of Christian truth individuals or organizations must affirm to be considered for membership in the ACCS. We see no need to add a second definition here as the Confession is sufficient. However, we do want to emphasize certain principles inherent in the Confession of Faith as they relate to education:

### **Sovereignty**

God is sovereign. He possesses absolute authority over all things. He has created all things, sustains all things, and governs all things.

### **Antithesis**

To provide a God-centered and truly Christian education, it is necessary to break completely free from the educational philosophies that surround us. We must build from the ground up, with the Scriptures as the foundation, both our educational philosophies and the framework in which we understand and present all subject matter.

### **Worldview**

The Christian worldview is the “lens” through which we see, understand, and teach all things. It is antithetical to all other worldviews and thus requires that we present all ideas and concepts as part of a larger whole defined by Christian truth.

### **Neutrality**

Because God is sovereign over all of His creation, there is no aspect of creation that does not reflect His glory and truth; hence, there is no place, subject, or issue that is neutral and that does not point to the Creator of all.

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*Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago*

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### ACCS

#### CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR THE WORLD

CLASSIS IS A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTICLES AND BOOK REVIEWS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD WHICH ARE RECOVERING CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. HARD COPIES ARE AVAILABLE TO ACCS MEMBERS AND BY SUBSCRIPTION.

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## Down the Road

by Patch Blakey

“How much longer, Daddy?”

I remember as a young boy asking my dad this question when the family was traveling on a long road trip. A generation later, I can easily remember my own children in our car when they were young asking this question of me and their mom. Children grow impatient, frustrated, and discouraged when they can't see down the road to the final destination, and have little sense of where they are on the journey.

Sometimes we are prone to get impatient or frustrated or discouraged with our labors in classical Christian education. We may find ourselves, like the saints of old, asking, “How long, O Lord?”

When Jesus Christ was resurrected following His violent crucifixion two thousand years ago, He could have easily spoken a word and made everything right from that moment on. But He didn't. It's been two millennia since then and the twelve disciples have now become perhaps a couple billion believers, still struggling to live faithfully day to day in the hope of seeing righteousness exalted and wickedness destroyed. The struggle to persevere can be long, tiring, frustrating at times, and yes, even discouraging. The strong temptation, to put this in a sports analogy, is to step off the playing field and watch the game from the sidelines.

It's not easy resurrecting an educational approach that has been lost for several generations. To state it another way, it's a lot of hard work. But we don't pursue this labor out of a fruitless sense of asceticism. There is a real

objective, and we desire to see it fulfilled, if maybe only in part, in our lifetimes. Isaiah described the distant future in these terms, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,

for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). At the time Isaiah was divinely inspired to write this prophecy, the invasion of Judah by the Babylonians and the subsequent 70-year exile of the Jews was still a generation or two away.

Again, looking to the then-distant future, the prophet Malachi wrote, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5-6). Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of this prophecy and we are still seeing the results of it being worked out in our own day with the hearts of the fathers being turned to their children as more and more parents recognize their God-given responsibility to educate their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These parents understand that their children need a Christian education—and not only a Christian education—but the best possible Christian education, which ACCS believes is a classical Christian education. As children see their parents making sacrifices so that they can have such a rich educational experience, their hearts are turning towards their parents for all the love that their parents have

bestowed on them in providing such a wonderful opportunity.

Lord willing, this vision will not end with the next generation, but will be carried on and enhanced by them for their children, and so on for generations to come until the prophecy of Isaiah mentioned above is practically realized. This is what we are looking for down the road. This is our vision of the future. It begins with our children and carries on for a thousand generations.

But there is a cost. We, as the saints of old, have to act in faith, and that can be a painful journey. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). We must use our eyes of faith to see what God sees when, as yet, it just isn't visible. We must persevere despite our frail sinfulness, our temptation to quit, despite our impatience, frustrations, and discouragement. We need to remember the lesson that Jesus taught His disciples when he fed the 5,000. We are responsible, but incapable. He will use what little we bring Him to get the job done, and done in such a way that there is an excess of abundance in the end (Luke 9:10-16). As Peter wrote, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

I am thankful to the authors who have contributed to this issue of *Classis* and am confident that they will encourage you to persevere with hope on this difficult journey. Thank you for your faithful labors!

**Patch Blakey** is the ACCS executive director.

## “Personal Holiness”

by Douglas Wilson, Christ Church

*The following is adapted from a speech delivered June 24, 2004, in Atlanta, Georgia, at the ACCS annual conference.*

... I was thinking of Philippians 3:1, actually, because I addressed this topic at these conferences before. Sometimes it has been called “Confession of Sin,” “Personal Holiness,” and so forth, and I want to be addressing the same basic thing now. The reason we need to do this over and over again is that it is a perennial issue. As schools start up, there are schools that need to hear it for the first time. As schools move from the startup phase into a phase of maintenance and growth, we need to be reminded of these things over and over again. So, I want to be addressing what I have addressed before and what I have said before. But I don’t get tired of saying it because if you have ears to hear, this is the sort of topic that is fresh every time and it is needful every time. We all need to be reminded of these things and I have not only spoken on this subject here before, but I have spoken on it in numerous other settings. It is the sort of thing that I need to hear, as often as I can come up with occasions to address it. So I do not want you to be tired of the subject—it is a very important subject. I think it is at the center of what you are doing, it is a daily issue, a moment-by-moment issue, and, if we are thinking rightly, we can’t get tired of it. If we are getting tired of it—“yes, I know I have heard this before”—then that is an indication that we need to redouble our efforts to pay attention

to this particular topic. The topic is personal holiness, confessing our sin, keeping short accounts with God and with one another.

Although I am not apologizing at all for addressing this subject again, I do want to back into the subject a little differently this year. I was struck by this just within the last week or so. Some of you have seen, in the Veritas Press catalog that Ty Fischer and I are editing, the Omnibus project they’re putting together. There are a bunch of books in the Omnibus curriculum and we are gathering writers to write introductory essays for all the different books and have study questions, exercises, and so forth. As we are working on the seventh grade curriculum, among the books that we are doing are *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Being in a position to assign writers to different things, I took the *Narnia Chronicles* for myself!

Because I had the *Narnia Chronicles* read to me—I don’t know how many times when I was a boy—things would get dislocated because I was the oldest and my dad would read us a chapter or two. I could read better than the others so I would sneak off that night and finish the book. Then, the next night when he wanted to read the next chapter, I wanted to read the next book. I was steeped in the *Narnia Chronicles* growing up and then, of course, we did the same thing with our kids and read them over and over again. We have seen the same thing happening with our grandchildren as our son-in-law, Ben Merkle, has read the *Narnia Chronicles*

to his kids, our grandkids. They have this little “thing” in the landing where he reads to them; and they each get a little teeny bit of beer and they sit around on the landing and whenever he says “Aslan” or “Narnia” while reading, they all toast “to Narnia and the North!” It is a very weird family!

And you might be wondering, what are little grandkids doing with a little teeny bit of beer, and especially what are they doing in a talk on personal holiness? But this is a very important point: holiness is defined by God, not by us and not by our traditions. That is something I want to emphasize a little later. Getting back to the Veritas curriculum, as I have said, I would like to write an introductory essay for each of these books; I’ve been steeped in the books and I don’t know how many times I have read them. But I thought, I am going to read through them again, but with a highlighter this time, and I’m going to read through them in chronological order. I’m halfway through the next to the last one now, *The Silver Chair*, and then *The Last Battle*. I’ve done this over the last two weeks; I have just been roaring through them. It has really given me a remarkable perspective on these books because one of the things that has come to my mind is the phrase “what I learned in Narnia.” It is an astounding amount of practical, vibrant, personal, Christian living. It really is remarkable.

One of the things I have learned in Narnia has to do with this particular topic and there are two elements of it. One of them is the nature of honest confession, the lack of what we would call “spin,” the necessity upon us of confession. “And then Digory

**Douglas Wilson** is the pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, ID. He is an ex-officio member of the ACCS board.

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said, 'We met the witch.' And Aslan said with a low growl, 'You met the witch?' 'Well I woke her up.' " Well when we first confess, when we first acknowledge what we have done, we say, "I met the witch." You met the witch? Is that the whole story? Repeatedly in the books, that sort of interchange happens between Aslan and one of the characters. Is that the whole story? Is that an honest confession? Are you spinning it or presenting it to look good for you? Honest confession is one of the fundamental elements that you see in the *Narnia Chronicles* and a second one is related to it and that is the element of personalism.

The title of this talk is "Personal Holiness" and we might read this as individual holiness. When I say personal holiness, you might be thinking that as individuals we are each to be holy, and, of course that is true. But personal holiness involves more than that—not just holiness for individual persons, but holiness defined as holiness between persons. Holiness is a function of relationship. When God the Father loves God the Son, and God the Son loves God the Father, and—following Augustine here—the Scripture calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of Christ. In the Nicene Creed we say in the Western form that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (*Filioque*) and the Son. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son together. He is the Holy Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit of God the Father. Augustine said, and I follow him here and believe this is scripturally warranted, that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love between the Father and the Son. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father and that

spirit of love between two infinite persons is itself an infinite person, the Holy Spirit. Holiness is defined by the Holy Spirit which is defined by the love between two persons.

Holiness is not conformity to an external wooden standard. Holiness is not keeping the rules. Holiness is not engraven on tablets of stone. It is engraven on the tablets of human hearts as Paul says. Once you move from personalism—a relationship between persons—to a wooden standard off to the side, you then start conforming to that standard because that is just what we do. Once you have lost the personal element, it doesn't much matter what the content of that standard is. It oftentimes begins in Christian circles with those things which are unobjectionable in themselves, the Ten Commandments for example. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; love your neighbor as yourself. That is where it starts and then we approach that wrongly. We forget that love God means love God. We think that love God means going through the motions of loving God. Then we put the Ten Commandments up and we start substituting in our own commandments. Then traditions develop which would cause many American Christians to gasp in disbelief—like little kids drinking beer and toasting Narnia. European Christians, Christians from virtually every other century and era would think, "Oh that is sweet, that is nice; they have something to drink." What has happened is we have substituted in our own standards of holiness for the standards of God and we have been able to do that because we have substituted the standards of God for God himself.

One of the things we see in Narnia, very clearly, is that sin is always the violation of a personal relationship. Sin is always the violation of someone's character and not an abstracted list of rules. What happens oftentimes when the children in Narnia are confessing sin or being brought to the point of where they will confess sin honestly, the thing that makes them do this is a personal encounter with Aslan. He just looks at them and he says, "That is not what I told you to do; that is not what I said." You don't take the words that he said and move them off to the side and say, "Oh, here is the abstracted wooden standard." Everything is bound up in the relationship; everything is personal. That is one of the things that has been remarkable for me coming back and reading through the books in rapid succession. How much of what I understand about this was not because I was born understanding it. I was brought up in a family where these things were taught, but also where these things were read to me.

One of the things that we want to do is impress upon you the importance of telling the right stories, the right kind of stories. This is another element, another thing that I learned in Narnia; this comes up all the time. Lewis says Eustace Scrubb liked to read books with pictures of grain elevators in them and fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools. Stalin comes to mind. The books that Eustace Scrubb read were strong on imports and exports, but they were weak on dragons. They didn't have the right element of dragons. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, when they get into Narnia, the robin leads the children from

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tree to tree to find Tumnus, and Edmund, who is treacherous and sneaky, has epistemological questions. “How do we know that the robin is good and how do we know that the White Witch is really bad; how do we know these things?” he says, turning into the philosopher. The answer to this is, “In all the stories that I have ever read, robins are good birds.” So let’s follow the robin.” The story, the moral authority of the fairytale, is important. The kind of stories you tell, the kind of stories you tell yourself, the kind of stories you read to your children, the kind of environment they grow up in, is going to settle whether or not your school is godly because it is characterized by godly relationships between godly persons, or whether your school is legalistic. If you don’t have godly persons involved in this, then what you will do is imitate other schools or other situations you have seen. The external rules that you have are the same rules, but the heart of it is gone.

So this is the difference between morality—biblical morality—which is personalism, and moralism which is not. Moralism has to do with observing the standard for the sake of the standard so that I can feel good about myself. That is moralism. Morality has to do with covenant relations between covenant persons between the holy triune God. He is holy in His love: the Father’s love for the Son, and the Son’s love for the Father, and the Holy Spirit of them both. Then we, as God’s people, are incorporated into fellowship with this triune God (about which I am going to say more a little bit later) and because of this we are ushered into this realm of covenant relationship.

Now, I want to emphasize this because covenant relationship is different from what many people assume when they say Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship. I like to reverse that and say Christianity is not a relationship, it is the religion, because we need to be reminded that we are of faith, that this is not all subjectivistic. The problem, to use the illustration that my friend Steve Wilkins has used, is that when we say Christianity is a relationship, what we mean is an individual relationship between God and each individual Christian—the relationship that we have with one another is not really that important, the church is not important, covenant relationships in covenant communities are really not that important. His illustration is that of a deep-sea diver; we are all deep sea divers and there is a hose on our helmet that runs up to heaven through which grace comes. Grace flows between God and us, and this is our individual relationship, our personal relationship with Jesus. And this is why any number of people with an individual relationship with Jesus can be so snarky to one another. Have you ever noticed that? Christians can really be nasty to one another—in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Amen. And off they go and you wonder, how did this happen? And then, of course, we are tempted to be snarky back. But behind all of this is a paradigm, an understanding of the Christian faith which leaves out the word “covenant” when you talk about relationship.

Yes, the Christian faith is a religion with a relationship at the center of it, but it is a

covenant relationship of God with His people. We believe in the triune God, which means that God Himself is a set of relationships: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The beginning of the word for God, the creator God, is Elohim. The ending of Elohim is plural, so, cherub, cherubim; seraph, seraphim. Elohim is when we confess our faith in the one true God. If we wanted to follow the Hebrew we would say, “We believe in one true Gods.” This is because God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one God, three Persons—are in themselves a society, a family. A Father and a Son and a Spirit, they are family; and so, consequently, what we might call horizontal relationships with one another are absolutely central. We can’t just say, “I am saved, I am going to heaven and I’ve got my deep-sea-diver helmet and God saved me and so it doesn’t matter what the rest of the Christian world does.” *It does matter what the rest of the Christian world does.*

Download the rest of the article from [www.accsedu.org](http://www.accsedu.org). See Publications > Classis.



## Harkness Discussion and Self-Education

by Bryan Lynch, Veritas School

During a discussion with William Buckley on Buckley's *Firing Line* program in 1988, Mortimer Adler said, "When the great books are well taught in a seminar, they are not taught as antiquities, they are not taught as objects of art, they are taught as raising moral and political and human problems which are just as pressing today as when they were written." Adler, one of the founders of the Great Books movement in the United States and a promoter of the Paideia projects, was a tireless proponent of reading and discussing the great books of Western civilization. And while this search for meaning and understanding lacked a commitment to the foundational truth of the Christian faith, it has been an inspiration to many teachers whose own education, they have discovered, was woefully insufficient. Interestingly, at the same time Adler was helping to bring the great books seminar back to American universities in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the philanthropist Edward Harkness donated \$5.9 million to Philips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire to fund a new seminar approach to teaching and learning at the secondary level. The Harkness method and the Harkness table, named for Mr. Harkness and the teaching method he promoted, has emphasized the discussion of books and ideas around specially designed tables in a growing number of schools ever since.

At Veritas School, Harkness discussions, used mainly (though not exclusively) in high school

classes, are content focused and teacher led, but student centered. That is, the students carry the load of learning how to ask, and of discussing, the questions raised by the content they are studying,

ideas with their students, requiring the students, as they are able, to increasingly do the heavy lifting, as the teacher questioned, encouraged, and led the discussion. Students in our discussions are all

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whether this is *Paradise Lost* or a topic in ancient history. We've been most successful in implementing Harkness discussions in high school humanities classes—Humane Letters, Rhetoric, Theology—but the principles are being applied in languages, math, and science classes as well. (Middle-school-level and elementary teachers have also successfully integrated beginning discussions using materials such as "Teaching the Classics.")<sup>1)</sup> Student-driven but content-rich and teacher-led discussions of books and ideas are particularly well suited to classical and Christian schools, where the emphasis is on older students evaluating ideas and presenting their understanding to others clearly and persuasively, and, ultimately, taking responsibility for their own education.

Of course, there was nothing really new in either Adler's seminars or in the Harkness method of teaching. Excellent teachers have always discussed

expected to be able to articulate their understanding, and to ask questions both of the text and of each other. There is no hiding in a good seminar discussion—careful preparation and a thoughtful search for truth are critical. Ideally, these discussions occur around an oval-shaped table where all students can see and interact with each other. Since the architecture of a place (and a classroom is no exception) significantly impacts what goes on in it, we are working to provide more of these tables for our classrooms.

Having students in rows is more efficient for certain tasks—organization, individual work, teacher access to students, group instruction—but the arrangement of the classroom environment highly influences intellectual habits and routines. The furniture becomes the lesson. The teacher speaking in front becomes the focus and the learning tends to flow one way, and the message to students is that efficient organization and passive compliance are what is really important. An excellent teacher, of course, will find ways to engage students whatever the arrangement. And there are

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times when a teacher *needs* to be at the center of the intellectual and organizational action in the classroom. However, if the teacher (rather than the student working with the content) is always at the center, then what may be the most important lesson students learn is that learning is directed by someone else, that it is something done for them, or to them, depending on their enthusiasm for it. Once away from this classroom they may find that learning is something they're just not interested in or aren't sure how to do on their own.

It's important to note, however, that we don't approach discussions as a kind of free-for-all sharing time during which anything goes. Rather, teachers guide students to prepare thoroughly and then discuss carefully and thoughtfully, applying both their content knowledge and their biblical worldview to the problems raised. But the bulk of the work in the discussion is placed squarely where it should be—on the students. This requires consistent training, for students and for teachers, in learning how to ask effective questions, what kinds of responses are most likely to get to meaning, even how to conduct a civil discussion. But the payoff is rich, especially for those of us who teach older students. For example, in one of our last class periods of this school year, my 11th grade Humane Letters class (all 18 of them) sat around our lone (for now) Harkness table and conducted a forty-five-minute challenging and thoughtful summary discussion of Gene Edward Veith's *Postmodern Times*. They asked questions about the meaning of passages and the truth of the concepts, made connections to previous learning,

and encouraged reluctant speakers to be more involved. My entire contribution amounted to two questions. Of course, it has taken three years of practice and training to get to this point, and it isn't necessarily the ideal that the teacher would be so minimally involved—sometimes the teacher participates significantly, correcting misperceptions, adding connections to previous learning, even turning the discussion into a presentation, as needed. The point is that the seminar discussions have helped students reach a point where their education is largely their own. All education is essentially self-education, and the Harkness method requires students to make significant steps in their learning.

This emphasis on student responsibility in the discussion, by the way, is where we think our discussions deviate from "Socratic" ones, at least as that term is often applied. In some versions of the Socratic discussion, the teacher, through a series of questions, leads the students inevitably to the truth; when it's all over the students may be justifiably impressed at the wisdom and ability of the teacher, but may have very little idea of how they arrived where they did. Certainly they would be frequently unable to recreate the journey. In a Harkness discussion, the students are not following; they are required to help lead. This active engagement means that the students take more ownership of their learning, the result being that understanding is more fixed in their minds. These discussions are an outstanding method of checking for understanding, and provide students with instant and descriptive feedback on

their ideas, as other students either confirm or challenge them. And, of course, the teacher will offer corrective or encouraging comments, as needed. One of the unexpected benefits I have seen is that retention of understanding of the topics from our discussions is much better than when we used to merely "go over" or even "discuss" together in other ways. Harkness discussions require deep engagement and direct participation with the material in ways that lead to greater long-term retention. This helps most students make connections to previous learning very naturally, and others can be taught to do so.

Highly engaged student discussions, with students required to not only answer questions but ask them, not only respond to teacher leading but to lead, develop in students a capacity for thoughtful, careful understanding of the text or subject at hand. Students improve their skills in presenting ideas effectively, but also in interacting with the ideas of others in a way that is collegial and respectful. The rhetoric stage does not always have to be about confronting and defeating error. It can also be about working together in the search for, and application of, the truth of Scripture in all areas of life. Harkness discussions provide students with wonderful opportunities to do all of this.

### Notes:

1. Information on "Teaching the Classics: Basic Seminar" can be found at <http://www.centerforlit.com/Materials/TC.aspx>.

## Cycling Through a Connected Curriculum

by Brent Harper, The Bear Creek School

I have never in my ten years of teaching seen anything as fruitful and dynamic as the integration of core classes with a focus on specific time periods. My current seventh grade students learn more deeply, make more connections, and find more meaning in literature than any group of students I have taught. The explanation for this startling success is an integrated curriculum. The English, history, and Christian studies departments at the Bear Creek School have established a new curriculum in upper school and middle school this year, and lower school will soon follow. This curriculum is integrated horizontally, with each grade level focusing on either the ancient, medieval, or modern world in those subjects, as well as vertically, with this sequence cycling three times throughout the curricula in grades 2–11. In other words, the students in grades 2, 6, and 9 study the ancient world, students in grades 3, 7, and 10 study the medieval world, and students in grades 4, 8, and 11 study the modern era.

Humans learn when their brains successfully store information in long-term memory, and we know there is one surefire way to facilitate this transfer from short-term to long-term memory: repetition, repetition, repetition. There are, however, two important variables that make repetition work really well. The first variable is the time interval between the repetitions. Research has shown that our brains learn information best when it is repeated and reinforced

every 90 to 120 minutes. This is one reason why those last-minute cram sessions never work for retaining information. Even if we repeat the information hundreds of times in an hour, we are likely to have forgotten what we learned a few hours later. Moreover, having discovered that the transfer from short-term to long-term memory can take years to complete, researchers have argued that knowledge is best retained when information is reinforced after an interval of two to three years.

This knowledge about repetition and retention is fairly recent and runs contrary to the whole structure of the modern school system with its division of the class day into hour long periods on different subjects. The consequence of this system is that right at that critical 90–120 minute window when students should be reinforcing the information learned in the previous class period, their minds are struggling to learn new information in a completely different subject.

As if this daily difficulty was not enough, the modern school curriculum also expects students to progress through the stages of a given discipline year after year with little or no repetition of knowledge from previous years. A glance at almost any school's history curriculum will demonstrate that there is almost no repetition. It is simply expected that students have retained what they have previously learned; however, from my college teaching experience, I can safely say that these students remembered little or nothing

about ancient and medieval history, not even big names like Constantine or Charlemagne.

Okay, so they don't remember the Dark Ages. No big deal; that's why we call them the Dark Ages, right? But certainly these students should remember the American history they learned just prior to graduation, right? Not according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Alarming, only 45% of high school seniors in both public and private schools passed the 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for American history.

Prompted by embarrassingly low scores like this, American schools have begun to realize that their traditional system is not conducive for helping students retain information in their long-term memory. Indeed, since the late 90s, most schools have been trying to push the idea of creating connections across the disciplines. How is this done? Teachers simply mention other subject areas during their own 90-minute period, prompting the students to remember, and thereby reinforce, information every 90–120 minutes or so. This seems promising, but the latest NAEP test results from 2010 showed that only 45% of graduating seniors were able to pass, the same percentage as in 2006. Future tests will likely reveal that a haphazard connection between the disciplines does very little to help students. It seems that the time interval between repetitions is not enough. But, remember, there were two variables deemed most important in repetition. The first is the time interval; the second is the importance of complex connections.

According to brain researcher

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## Cycling Through . . .

Dr. John Medina, we learn information better if we memorize it in combination with other closely connected pieces of information. For example, imagine that you are in my English class,

century, and the history teacher mentions Newton's seminal work, *Principles of Mathematics*. Both teachers mention the other discipline, but their information has no logical or necessary

theology, and literature into an integrated whole that moves chronologically, age by age, toward the Savior. If Christian education is truly a teaching that follows the Bible, then the integration of the subjects with a focus on a chronological progression of the ages is a must for Christian schools.

The Bear Creek School is not just "Christian" but also classical. And this new curriculum integration is as classical as it is Christian. The ancient Greeks and Romans were onto something when they based their educational system upon the trivium, which helped students reinforce information as they moved through the grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric stages of learning. Not only does this approach encourage the repetition of material every three to four years, it also shows a remarkable understanding of how the human brain develops. The grammar stage focuses on the acquisition of a fact base and is very well suited for younger children whose brains are made to be super-absorbers of information. In this rotation through the historical cycle, the basic facts of the ancient, medieval, and modern historical periods are introduced and reinforced so that the child has a factual foundation that will be the basis of more detailed information in future stages.

By sixth grade, the child's brain is starting to refine knowledge, comparing and contrasting information and trying out logical deductions and inductions. This, the dialectic stage of the trivium, arrives just in time for the second rotation through our historical cycle. Now the information learned in the grammar stage is reviewed and refined as the students move through the historical periods again. More depth is added in

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studying Roland, the hero of the medieval epic, *The Song of Roland*; he was a Christian leader who had arrogantly refused to summon help when Islamic forces ambushed his army, but later, realizing his error, blew his horn for help and died defending the pass into France. That is all good, but you will remember him better if you know that he served under Charlemagne, that he fought to push back the Islamic forces that had recently invaded France, and that Boromir, the famous character from Tolkien's *Fellowship of The Ring*, was based on Roland. Boromir, like Roland, arrogantly tried to take the Ring, but later, realizing his mistake, died blowing his horn for help.

The secret is that the information has to be memorized with connected information, not just information that happens to be from the same discipline. The problem with many schools' integration of curriculum is that the associations being made by one teacher are not connected enough to what was learned in another class. Sure, the math teacher says that Arabic numerals were first introduced into Spain in the tenth

century, and the history teacher mentions Newton's seminal work, *Principles of Mathematics*. Both teachers mention the other discipline, but their information has no logical or necessary

1) What did Roland do when he realized he needed help? and 2) Who wrote the *Principles of Mathematics*?

Number one was likely easier to answer, even though number two had been mentioned a mere four sentences earlier.

While research supports Bear Creek's practice of integration, our real source of inspiration for this method of teaching comes from biblical tradition. For two thousand years, Christians have used the Bible as their main source for learning language, literature, theology, and history. It is worth pondering the beauty of the biblical narrative in which God's divine revelation to the world is revealed in history. More than a history of God's plan, the Bible is also an amazing literary masterpiece, blending within its narrative a complete compendium of all literary and language devices. The Spirit has woven history,

## Cycling Through . . .

history, and in English students start to read the original classics of the time period, making deeper connections and understanding the literature far better than they would if they did not have such a rich historical context.

After middle school comes the third stage of the trivium: the rhetoric stage. Armed with deeper knowledge and sharper logical tools, students will be ready for the third rotation through the historical cycle, once again moving through the ancient, medieval, and modern eras. This time around, their Christian studies courses are integrated into the historical sequence along with history and English.

It is here in the last stage of the trivium that the real value of a classical Christian education becomes apparent. The distinct advantage of the trivium's classical stages is the way that true intellectual depth can be developed. The information learned at the grammar stage is only deepened at the dialectic stage and the rhetoric stage, so that the student has a trove of connections for thinking critically about history, literature, and Christianity, among other disciplines. One of the key problems of the modern educational system is that schools try to teach everything, leading many educators to joke about a curriculum that is a mile wide and an inch thick. In other words, students' knowledge base, while broad, is too shallow to sustain critical thought. The Bear Creek School wants to

encourage intellectual strength by enriching students with deeper knowledge so that they can practice writing detailed analytical essays, or participate in class discussions where stronger arguments are expected due to the depth of the subject.

What excites me most about the Bear Creek School is how we are passing down a legacy to our children. The Israelites, Greeks, and Romans bequeathed to us a cultural legacy—a legacy of literature, revelation, philosophy, and government. The men and women of the Middle Ages studied these works, adding and blending Christian ideas into the literature, philosophy, and governmental theories. And the modern world rose to new heights by standing on the shoulders of the giants before them. Science rediscovered the atom, first postulated by the Greek philosophers, while the Founding Fathers modeled their new government on the government of the Roman Republic, and the rising business class based their success on the fiscal tools developed by medieval Italian merchants.

These traditions stretch back in time, each generation taking up from the previous, and leaving its legacy for the next. As Christianity spread, generation by generation, new people became the heirs of this legacy. The Western spiritual and intellectual history became their inheritance as surely as the Bible and the Kingdom of God became theirs. Regardless of where we are from, we are all, as Americans and Christians, heirs to Israel, Greece, and Rome.

## The Trivium of Narnia: Using *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to Explain Classical Education

by Brad Almond, Providence Preparatory School

One of the questions we frequently receive from parents at our school's information meetings is "how is classical education different from modern education?" Part of our answer to this question involves an attempt to illustrate two principles from Dorothy Sayers' essay "The Lost Tools of Learning": namely, that classical education employs language-based subjects in favor of discipline-based subjects, and that it emphasizes different mental faculties according to the developmental age of the child.

The three subjects of primary and secondary classical education are grammar, logic, and rhetoric (known collectively as the *trivium*), all of which contribute to the proper and eloquent use of language. Generally speaking, each subject corresponds to a different developmental stage, and each stage emphasizes different mental faculties and employs different pedagogical practices to foster them. Disciplinary subjects such as math, history, and science are still utilized in classical education, but rather than being pursued as ends in themselves, they are relatively subordinated in the service of these broader language-based subjects. That is, the subjects of classical education cut across traditional disciplines and use them as raw materials to be worked on by the mind in its different stages of development. To clarify this distinction we often use a gym metaphor. Think of traditional disciplinary subjects as the various fitness apparatuses

in a gym and classical education as the systematic use of these apparatus to develop mental fitness: strength, flexibility, coordination, and stamina. Thus, we use these disciplinary "apparatuses" because they are available to us to help us achieve our educational goal; but this goal is mental fitness, not an instrumental mastery of the apparatus themselves.

But all of this is difficult to grasp without a coherent illustration to hang it all on. Thus, to illustrate these points we make use of the dearly loved book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. The story chronicles the adventures of four children who discover a magical portal to another world inhabited by talking beasts wherein they engage in a struggle to overthrow an oppressive witch and eventually become kings and queens in the service of the Great King, Aslan. While ostensibly a children's adventure book that falls under the generic heading of "juvenile fiction," a classical educator can utilize it differently for a variety of curricular ends, depending on his objective and the developmental age of his students.

### The Grammar Stage

The easiest way to explain how this is done is to list several questions that could be asked of students at various developmental stages. During the grammar stage (often through about grade 4) it would be appropriate to ask

questions such as the following (in approximate order of difficulty):

- What are the names of the four Pevensie children?
- Which of the Pevensie children gets into Narnia first?
- With whom does Lucy have tea during her first visit to Narnia?
- With whom do the four Pevensie children have dinner shortly after entering Narnia together?
- What sort of animal is Aslan?
- Who lives in Narnia?
- What is a faun?
- What is Narnia?
- What do Narnians call human boys and girls?
- What is the weather like in Narnia? Why is it like this?
- How did the children get into Narnia?
- What does the White Witch do to her enemies and subjects with whom she is angry?
- What enchanted food does Edmund receive from the White Witch? What effect does the enchantment produce?
- What happens to Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy when they chase the white stag into the thicket?
- Why does Edmund not receive a gift from Father Christmas?

Most readers who know this story could easily answer these questions. The reason this is so is that the answer to each of these questions is explicitly stated in the text. That is, for each of these questions there is a place in the book where a child can point and say, "here is the answer." So, to answer these questions a child need only to recall what he has read (or has had read to him). Thus, the mental faculty that is

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most necessary to answer these questions is memorization. This approach to instruction is not unlike a game in which a child is momentarily shown a complicated picture and, after the picture is hidden again is asked to recall or describe what objects, persons, or activities appeared in the picture. Or, similarly, it is like allowing a child to listen to a piece of music and afterwards asking him to hum the melody or to identify which instruments he heard. The grammar stage of the classical curriculum emphasizes the accumulation of facts and stories because that is the most natural proclivity of the human mind at this age. Thus, the questions asked during the grammar stage would involve naming, identifying, describing, or defining the persons, things, or events that appear in the story, as the list above illustrates.

### The Logic Stage

The logic stage of the classical curriculum would involve a different set of questions in service to the changing developmental age of the child. Consider the following list (also in approximate order of difficulty):

- What happens as a result of Edmund's betrayal?
- Why does the White Witch employ spies?
- What does Mr. Beaver mean when he says that Aslan is a good lion, but not a safe or tame one?
- Why does hearing the name "Aslan" have different effects on each of the children?
- What is the deeper magic, and where does it come from?
- What might the lamppost, the stone table, and the act of passing through the wardrobe symbolize?

- Is this a true story? Why or why not?
- How does the prophecy of the four thrones at Cair Paravel affect the outcome of the story? In other words, does the whole story unfold because of the choices the children make, or because of some other reason?
- Was it just for Aslan to die?
- Why did Aslan christen King Edmund "the Just"?

This question set moves beyond simple recall and begins to require analysis, or the examining of the tale's constituent parts with a view to determining not just what the parts are called, but what the parts are for, how they work with the other parts, and what they might mean. Unlike in the grammar stage, the answers to these questions are not explicitly stated in the text, and may be open to multiple interpretations.

Admittedly, some of these questions involve subtleties that students at this age (roughly grades 5 through 8) might not appreciate. But this does not mean the questions are fully beyond them. In terms of difficulty these questions pick up where the grammar stage left off. The first question is an incremental step beyond simple memory, because it asks for cause and effect (i.e., what happened because of . . . ) rather than just sequence (i.e., what happened after . . . ). Other questions require abstract thinking, which children at the grammar stage are often not fully capable of. Other questions lend themselves to debate, so that students can engage the questions in this form to develop their reasoning and argumentation capabilities. Other questions touch on ethical issues and

would require some integration with material learned at the grammar stage. For example, the question about the justice of Aslan's death requires that the child have an established basis for justice, such as the Decalogue or the Beatitudes. Finally, some questions require multiple mental faculties, such as the final question, which requires both abstract reasoning and cause and effect.

Other age-appropriate pedagogy for the logic stage might include an imitation or characterization speech, which builds upon simple recitation exercises at the grammar stage and anticipates the rhetoric stage of the curriculum. For example, a student might be asked to compose the speech Aslan could have given to Edmund explaining what Aslan had done for him, or the speech Peter might have given the Narnian army before engaging the hordes of the White Witch, or the speech Aslan might have given when he knighted Edmund on the field of battle.

### The Rhetoric Stage

Finally, in the rhetoric stage of the trivium the questions change again in keeping with the ongoing development of children as they transition into early adulthood. Here is a sampling of possible questions:

- Is this story a myth, an allegory, or something else? How do you know? Give examples from other sources to corroborate your answer.
- How would a citizen of ancient Greece or medieval Europe have interpreted this tale?
- Why did Lewis write this story? In other words, what might this story tell us about Lewis's beliefs regarding the role of the



## Trivium of Narnia . . .

imagination in the development of the spiritual life?

- Some of Lewis's friends and critics considered the inclusion of Father Christmas in this story a literary mistake. On what basis could this criticism be meaningfully levied against Lewis? On what grounds could it be refuted?
- How does this story reflect a medieval, pre-Copernican cosmology, and what important lessons did Lewis seem to think this view could teach the modern West?
- Philip Pullman, an outspoken critic of C.S. Lewis, has described the Narnia series as "dishonest," "propaganda," "blatantly racist," "monumentally disparaging of women," and "one of the most ugly and poisonous things I've ever read."<sup>1</sup> Prepare a rebuttal to Pullman's criticisms that includes comparison and contrast of the worldviews and cosmologies implicit in Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and in Pullman's *The Golden Compass*.

Unlike in previous stages, questions in the rhetoric stage require a full integration across multiple subjects. The above questions range across history, philosophy, science, theology, literature, and so on. Students are pressed to consider the significance of the story as an artifact in multiple historical, artistic, philosophical, and theological contexts. Furthermore, these questions are difficult: there are no fixed or prepared answers, and thoughtful responses to these questions would require an investiture of significant time and effort. In addition to the command of a wide body of knowledge,

the preparation of answers (whether spoken or written) would also necessarily require advanced composition techniques.

The use of lists such as these tends to clarify for our prospective families the point that classical education is less about subject matter and more about how it is used in the service of broader curricular goals. This is further clarified when we point out that the subject matter in this case is only a children's story. The goal in this instance is not simply to know the story (although it is a good one), but to use it to create opportunities to challenge the mind and heart to grow.

Notes:

1. <http://dedulysses.wordpress.com/2006/07/15/the-darkside-of-narnia-by-pullman/>

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## Teaching With Grace

by Leslie Collins, Covenant Academy

It's Monday morning. You have six lessons to teach, 100 papers to return, and a class of students to attend to. Your principal enters the room and makes a comment about the handwriting on your board. She'd like you to make sure that your letters are consistent with the handwriting standards in the curriculum. You're a little hurt because that's all she says.

A parent enters the room. The test that you carefully graded at midnight and returned the next morning is in her hand. She does not agree with your grading policy and begins to talk with you about this. You listen to her and ask to follow up the conversation with an email when you have time to respond. You begin the day. "Good morning boys and girls" is coming out of your mouth but there is an entirely different conversation going on in your head. Your mind is parked in a different location.

"Doesn't my principal know that I am doing the best I can with learning this new handwriting? Doesn't she understand how hard it is to manage all of these details along with everything else I am doing? Is she not happy with my work? Couldn't she have told me what I did well first?"

"Doesn't that mother understand how hard I'm working? Doesn't she see the way her son is developing bad habits and making excuses? Why doesn't she trust me and appreciate how hard I have worked to help him?"

You catch yourself thinking about this. You tell yourself to cut it out, but you find yourself continuing to think about it throughout the day. Your mind

is parked here. In fact, it seems you have a reserved spot. What can you do in this situation? How do you respond to being sinned against or at least misunderstood?

Later in the day the children have lunch and it's raining. Indoor

lesson, too. The students do a fine job singing and chanting and memorizing and learning new skills. You end the day and send them on their way. You make yourself a cup of tea and check your email. You have one email in

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*Our identity in Christ frees us from self-atonement, blame shifting, excuse making and other forms of fig leaves. These are rash attempts to cover our sin and shame but nothing but the blood of Jesus will completely remove them.*

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recess! "Of course," you say, "now they will be loud inside during recess and fidgety all afternoon as well." You begin to teach your next lesson and realize that you forgot to run the copies off during your planning time because you were emailing that mother about her son's grade. Great! Now you have to run and make them while the children are chanting and the teacher across the hall keeps an eye on your class. You get to the copier and find out that it's jammed. You walk out of the office and nearly run into your principal. She tells you that she wants to see you after school in her office. Not only is your mind parked on what she thinks of you, your stomach is as well.

While you were out of the room two students disobeyed your clear instructions to remain seated while chanting their math facts. You correct them and then try to patch up the lesson that you started. You make it through the lesson somehow and the next

your inbox. The mom has replied to tell you how unfair you are, how insensitive you are being to her son, how many other parents agree with her and how she is going to speak to your principal tomorrow.

And then the words of James—"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly"—suddenly make a lot of sense to you.

These are the problems that we face daily in the classroom. We are seeking to repair the ruins, not of the American system of education, but the ruins of our father Adam. We are seeking to repair the damage of the Fall. In our quest to understand and apply the methods of Christian and classical education, we are seeking daily redemption from our suffering as sinners for we do indeed suffer. Sin alters the way we think, the way we feel, the way we teach. And grace changes that.

Not only do we suffer from our own sinful condition, we suffer from the sinful condition of others. We experience unkindness, rudeness, gossip, anger, and copier

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## Teaching With Grace . . .

jams. As for our own culpability, we know the good we ought to do and we do not do it. I should overlook that comment. I should not wrap my identity in my perfect elementary school handwriting. I should not wrap my identity in what my boss thinks about my perfect elementary school handwriting. We do the things we hate. I hate how angry I am that the copier isn't working. I hate how flustered I am when parents are upset. I hate knowing that I am angry at this mother and her son.

We are living in a world of sin and suffering in the sin. In fact, we have suffered so much and so long that we are blind to the depths of our sinful nature. That is why Jesus came. We have a High Priest who came to redeem us from this suffering. He understands. He suffered with us and intercedes for us even now. He was made perfect through suffering. How is it that the perfect Son of God was made perfect through suffering?

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers (Hebrews 2:10-11).

In His temptation, His trial, His suffering, He completed the work that the first Adam failed to do. It actually wasn't enough that Jesus died for us . . . He lived for us first. And He is not ashamed to call us brothers. When you are in the midst of your greatest struggle against your own sin or someone else's, your Jesus is not

ashamed to call you brother, and He is praying for you so that you will remember that He's already navigated the success story behind this day. Your High Priest has endured temptation and never once fallen short so that when your Heavenly Father looks at you, He sees not your insecurity, not your short temper, not your grammar school teacher desire for order and control, He sees the righteousness of Christ and the perfect balance of truth and mercy, which is grace.

He offers you a covering of grace so that when you sin or are sinned against, you do not need to cover over your sin with your own righteousness, or your own identity; you can have His. When you are sinned against, you do not need to exact judgment and condemnation, because He is not ashamed to call them brother, either. When your boss makes a comment that causes you to feel insecure, instead of saying, "Oh no, she thinks I'm a horrible teacher. I'm doing everything wrong. My days are numbered!" you can say, "I am loved by my Heavenly Father in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without His permission. He has wrapped me in His identity. It doesn't matter if I have the worst handwriting in the entire community of classical and Christian schools, my identity is in Christ, not my handwriting." Our identity in Christ frees us from self-atonement, blame shifting, excuse making and other forms of fig leaves. These are rash attempts to cover our sin and shame but nothing but the blood of Jesus will completely remove them. Did you ever think how silly Adam and Eve looked when they put those fig leaves together? But that is exactly what we look like

when we immediately look for excuses when we are confronted. Remember what Adam said to God when God asked Him what he had done? He actually blamed God! How foolish that seems, but we do the same thing when we say, "I wouldn't have done that if you . . . but you make me so angry . . ." Sin blinds us to ourselves and it blinds us from extending the same forgiveness we have received to others. We suffer greatly in our sinful condition.

When I say that we are suffering I am not agreeing with the heresy that sin is just a sickness. We were dead in our sin, not sick in it. But it is a suffering as much as death and as much as cancer. It is a suffering as much as the pains of childbirth and as much as the pains of growing old. We suffer because of the father of lies. He hates us. He seeks to devour us, to ruin us, and cause our sufferings to multiply.

Thankfully, we are children of the Father of Light and we are made in His image. In His image, we possess the qualities of His character that make us like Him in our calling. He is good and what He does prospers. In this way, we seek to do good work and to be successful. We desire this. God is a God of order, so we seek to be orderly, especially if we are grammar school teachers. God is creative, so we seek to be creative. These are good things to desire. But have you ever noticed how our desires can turn so quickly into demands?

Teaching with grace means we fully embrace our struggles and our Savior and those who are offending us. We do not need to pretend that we are not struggling; the Savior came to save us because we needed saving and we need it every day.

## Teaching With Grace . . .

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (James 4:1-3).

Fights and quarrels, struggles and conflicts come from desires that battle within us. When our desires turn into demands, they become sinful. To desire respect is a good thing. Our students should respect us. We work hard to establish biblical school culture, but we cringe when we read of the respect lessons taught to Oliver Twist and Jane Eyre because their teachers demanded respect for their own interests. We should desire our students to respect us, but only God can make that child's heart change, not our demands.

We should desire success; should we desire failure? Desires become demands when we grumble because success isn't attainable. The copy machine, that angry mother. We want success—that's okay, but the moment you can't have it—what's your response? Anger? Self-pity? Grumbling? Gossip? And then, when you catch yourself, what do you do next? Blame others? Make excuses?

According to James, desires have gone wrong when we have begun to serve another god. Johnny Tremain's initial success was for his own pleasure. His desire turned into a demand in his pride and anger and eventually he was able to see this, which is why this is such a great redemptive story.

Desiring comfort or appreciation isn't a bad thing. Jesus was ministered to by angels when He was hungry. Jesus wept. Comfort is a mercy of God. But what happens when you can't have your Starbucks? Or your classroom with windows? Or your 401(k)? When we begin to demand comfort, appreciation, and success we begin to turn our eyes on a different god because what was a good desire has now become a demand.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:4-6).

Demanding our desires is adulterous. We begin to serve another god: ourselves. God opposes this but gives grace to the humble. Grace is getting what we do not deserve. Contrary to popular belief you don't deserve a break today—you deserve hell. Grace is knowing that instead of a hot seat, you have been given a seat at the table of the King.

Grace is getting what we do not deserve. Mercy is not getting what we do deserve. Grace is knowing that we, who suffer from sin, have a faithful Savior who protects us so well that so much as a copier page can't get jammed without His permission. Indeed, even that email fits His purpose for our salvation. His Holy Spirit is living and working in us so that we

can wholeheartedly and willingly love that mother, that son, and submit to our principal, and teach our students because we live for Him, because He lived for us. Instead of holding on to our own righteousness, we can hold onto His.

We often talk in classical education about *in loco parentis*, in place of the parents, but Hebrews tells us that we are co-heirs with Christ, that we share in His inheritance, His calling to redeem the nations. We are co-redeemers. When we are in this process of repairing the ruins, of taking thoughts captive, we are co-redeemers with Christ, we stand *in loco Christus*. When we encounter unbelief and sin, we should not be surprised. We should not be afraid. We should not be offended or pretend that we have never made the same mistakes. "I would never . . .," "when I was your age . . .," "how dare she . . .?" We should be redemptive.

The Gospel gives us boldness to know that we are sinners and that we are set free. It gives us boldness to know that we are called to do good and to go forth boldly. Martin Luther admonished us to sin boldly, not to take lightly the offense of sin, but to boldly take the strength of the Gospel and redeem the situations that God has placed us in with confidence that He who began a good work will not stop until it is finished.

A day as I have described is pretty normal. It's easy to become discouraged. It's not wrong to desire respect, appreciation, control, comfort. It's when those desires turn into demands that we begin to enter into the gates of our own kingdom. And it can happen in a split second. How will you respond with grace?

## Teaching With Grace . . .

### Fruits of the Spirit

Teaching with grace means that you can boldly love that mother who is not loving you, because you are dearly loved by your heavenly Father. Teaching with grace means that you can count it all joy when you experience various trials because your Father is working all things out for your good. Teaching with grace means that you can have peace when your principal corrects you because your Father has given you His identity. You can have patience when the copier jams because you have been dramatically rescued from the ravages of sin. Teaching with grace means that you can respond with kindness towards children who are foolishly disobeying because your Heavenly Father has displayed such kindness in calling you, who have so often disobeyed Him, His beloved child. By grace you do good and speak the truth boldly in gentle love where it needs to be spoken. By grace you can be faithful when you have been tempted to be faithless. By grace you can teach in such a way as to redeem what is lost and repair what is ruined.

Grace differs from self-righteousness in a very simple way. Both seek to do the right thing, but for different reasons. Grace accepts failure boldly and completely and claims the righteousness of God. Self-righteousness reduces failure to manageable levels and claims the righteousness of self. As saved sinners, we extend grace because we have received it. As a teacher, you are a servant, walking in the footsteps of the Son of God. You should consider yourself blessed to suffer and serve Him.

### We are gifted by God for others

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12:1).

None of us deserves the gifts we have. It is an honor to have them, and we have a responsibility to improve upon what God has given to us.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline (2 Tim 1:6-7).

You have been given the gift of teaching and the task of repairing. It is our duty to seek to fan the flame of our gifts. Not that we can be perfect, for seeking perfection will actually stifle the excellence we want to cultivate, but we should seek constantly to improve and hone our craft. This means hard work. The person with the gift of teaching must study zealously to learn God's truth and must then labor diligently to communicate it in a clear and inspiring manner. The person with the gift of service must strive to become competent and proficient in his particular area of service in order to ensure that the results of his labor reflect a standard of excellence that glorifies God. We are fallen and sinful in our nature. Excellence does not come naturally or easily to a sinner. But excellence does not come by being afraid of failure. Fear of failure will cripple us and prevent us from teaching with grace. Perfectionism is a spirit of fear, not the spirit of love, confidence, and discipline

that Paul is speaking about.

Because we are human, do not be surprised by your humanity. Develop thin skin towards your weaknesses but thick skin towards others. In this way you put on grace and put off the sin that so easily entangles. Because I promise you this, you will fail. And I challenge you with this: sin boldly, love boldly, speak boldly, and teach with grace.



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