

# STUDY GUIDE

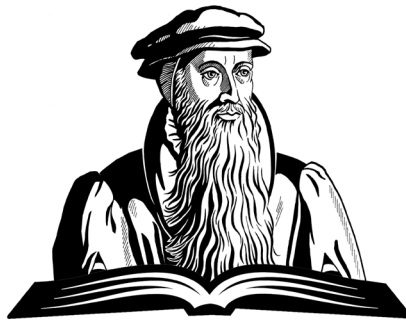
for

## *Classical Christian Education*

Video Lecture Series  
*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

LECTURE #3

## Classical Elements for Education from Antiquity



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

**John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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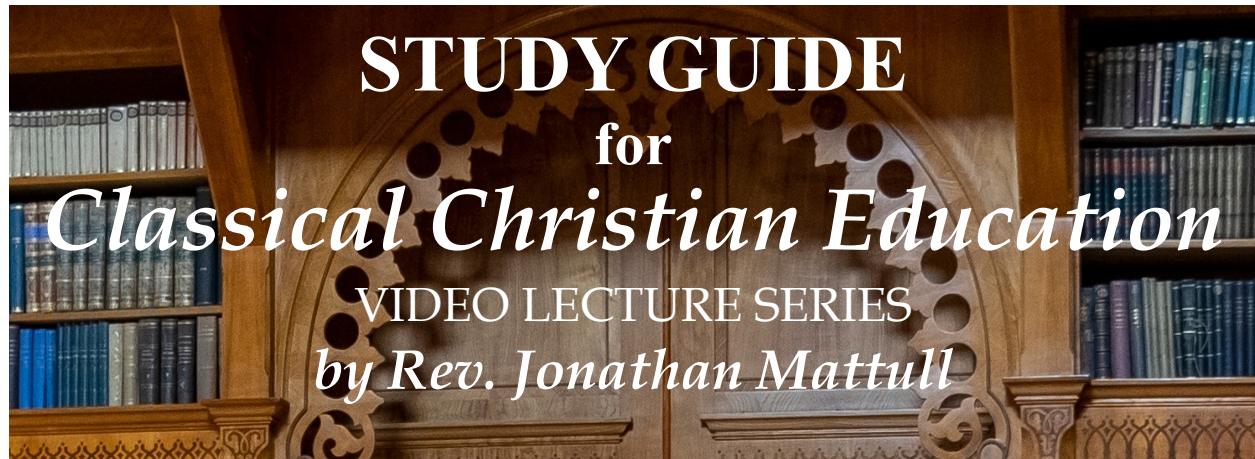
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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

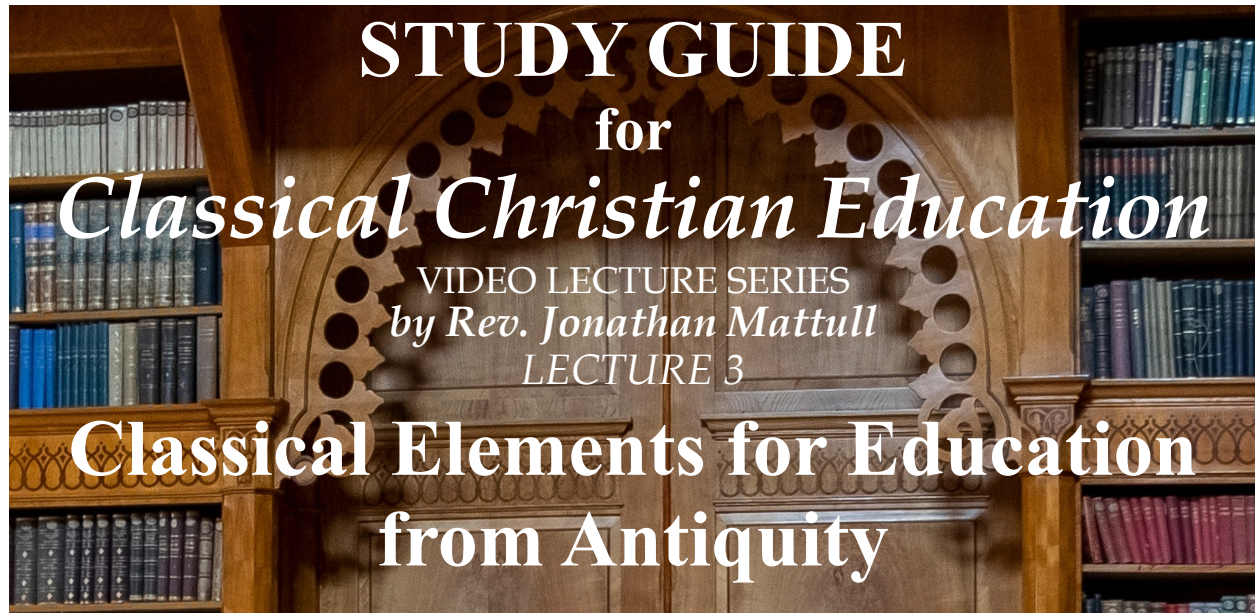
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1. An Introduction to Classical Christian Education
2. Christian Commitments in Education
- 3. Classical Elements for Education from Antiquity**
4. Reading Authors from Antiquity with Discernment and Benefit
5. How Christ Transforms Classical Education
6. The Liberal Arts in Christian Education
7. The Importance of Language in Classical Education
8. Historical Overview of Classical Education
9. Learning from Our Heritage: Education from the Protestant Reformation
10. Potential Dangers in Classical Christian Education
11. Benefits of Classical Christian Education
12. Navigating the World of Education Today
13. Getting Started with Classical Christian Education in the Home or School
14. Continuing the Quest: Life-long Learning
15. Remembering the End: Serving the Lord to God's Glory



### Introduction

In our first lesson, we considered a brief overview of what is meant by *Classical Christian Education*, as well as the need for it. In our second lesson, we looked at fundamental *Christian Commitments for Education*. In this, our third lesson, we'll look at what we're calling *Key Classical Elements for Education*. We'll take a closer look at the key element of education that the ancients—the unbelieving ancients; the pagans—emphasized. In doing so, we look at education before it was transformed by Christianity. In later lessons, we'll look at how Christians adopted this form of education and implemented it in such a way that was to the glory of Jesus Christ.

### Theme

Key Elements for Education from the Classical Period

### Key Points

1. Some clarification and historical background to Classical Education.
  - a. The ancients were not united in every detail of educational theory or practice.
  - b. The Classical Era, or Antiquity pertains to Greek and Roman civilizations from 8th century BC through 5th century AD.
  - c. Classical Education can be best seen in *the Hellenistic period* from 323 BC to AD 30.
    - 2) Alexander the Great conquered a great empire from Greece to India, and brought with him the Greek institutions and customs, including Greek education.
    - 3) When the Roman Empire arose after the Hellenistic period, it took over the Hellenistic thoughts, institutions, and it's view, including the emphases of Greek education.
- c. The Classical Era had practices which were at odds with the teachings of the Bible: idolatry, social immorality—though many of their practices were good and right.

2. The First Key Element: *Education was to Lead a Child unto Maturity.*

a. Greek word for education, “*paideia*”—means the comprehensive training up of a child to become a fully-equipped adult.

1) Used in Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 12:5.

b. Greek word “*areté*”—means to lead a child to excellence.

c. “*paideia*” translated into Latin is “*humanitas*”—became the English word, “Humanities,” which is the study of the Liberal Arts.

d. Traditionally, a study in the Humanities was required to become a fully-developed and mature person, also called “the virtuous man.”

1) Courageous, wise, self-controlled, and just (the four cardinal virtues).

e. Differences between the modern approach to education, and Classical Education, using the example of “creative writing.”

1) Modern education allows young children to write whatever, however they desire. There’s little to no boundaries or guidance, as long as they express themselves.

2) Classical education first trains the child using writing exercises, “*progymnasmata*,” “*the before exercises*,” to master language, the concept, and story first. It did not expect children to write well until they had gained these skills.

2. The Second Key Element: *Education was to Cultivate a Love for Truth.*

a. Ancient educators that stood the test of time.

1) Plato’s works: *Dialogues* and *Apology of Socrates*.

2) Aristotle: *The Organon*.

3) Quintilian was a great teacher of classical rhetoric.

b. They only had the natural revelation, and did not have the inspired Scriptures. But they understood that there is objective truth, and this aligns with Scripture.

3. The Third Key Element: *Education was to Engage the Whole Person.*

a. The ancient educators understood the importance of teaching the whole person—body, soul, mind, affections, and emotions.

1) Plato taught the importance of music, poetry, and dance, in his books, *Republic* and *The Law*.

2) Homer’s books, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, are epic poems in meter.

b. The ancients taught the importance of developing the body too.

1) The *gymnasium* was a place where students developed their athletic ability—running, jumping, wrestling, boxing—and learned basics of hygiene and medicine.

4. As a teacher, you may be asking, “What do we do with these things?”

a. Remember, as a teacher, you are leading these children toward a goal.

- 1) In order to lead students toward maturity you need to be mature yourself, cultivate wisdom and all the virtues in yourself.
- b. Remember that you are to help the students discern and embrace truth.
  - 1) This demands that your students learn formal logic.
- c. Remember that your students are whole people with a human body and a rational soul.
  - 1) You must teach their mind, but you must also address their bodies and souls.
  - 2) Good posture, balance, running, jumping, throwing things.
  - 3) Teach healthy habits of physical fitness.

**Study Questions**

1. Please briefly explain the Hellenistic period. When the Roman Empire arose, what did it do with the Hellenistic culture, especially regarding Classical Education?

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2. How should we view those ungodly and immoral things that are seen in the Classical Education practices during the Hellenistic period?

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3. What is the meaning of the Greek word “*paideia*” and how do the Scriptures use this word? What does the Greek word “*areté*” mean? Where does the Latin word “*humanitas*” come from, and what English word was derived from it?

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4. What does the phrase “*the virtuous man*” refer to, and how was it used throughout Classical Antiquity in regards to education?

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5. Briefly explain the “*progymnasmata*” exercises that were used in Classical Education. How would you compare that to the modern approach of the “creative writing” lessons described by Rev. Mattull?

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6. What are some of the ways that we see the “love for truth” expressed in the ancient works? But did those ancient writers ever come to know the ultimate saving truth? What did they not have access to?

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7. What are some reasons we can know that the ancient educators included music and physical training in the education of their students? Why did they find it important to include them?

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8. What are some practical methods of “leading children or students toward a goal” in the activities involved in education?

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9. When one is teaching students to know what truth is and how to discern truth from error, what is the one thing that is essential for them to learn first? What do the terms “straw man” and “steel man” mean in regard to arguing for truth?

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10. Rev. Mattull reminds us that children are “whole people.” What does that mean as pertains to their education? What are the benefits of physical development in education?

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**Further Study**

1. Why is it important for the teacher to have a good understanding of Formal Logic? How can Logic be taught on different levels? Have you studied Logic yourself, or do you plan to do so?

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2. How have these Lectures #2 and #3 informed your understanding of Classical Christian Education? Are you interested to learn more in the upcoming lessons?

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