

# STUDY GUIDE

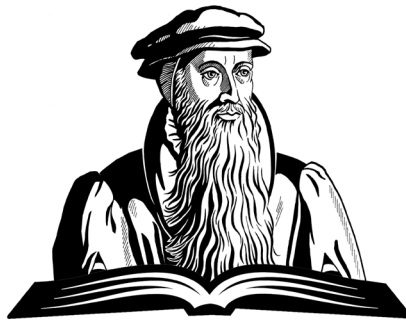
for

## *Classical Christian Education*

Video Lecture Series  
*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

LECTURE #6

## The Liberal Arts in Classical Education



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

**John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

© 2025 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

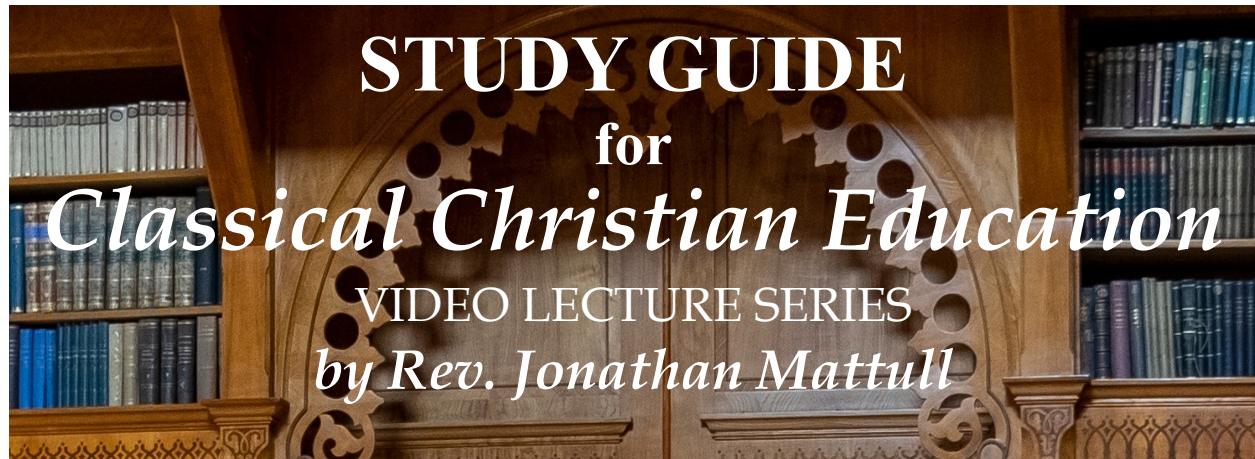
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA.

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

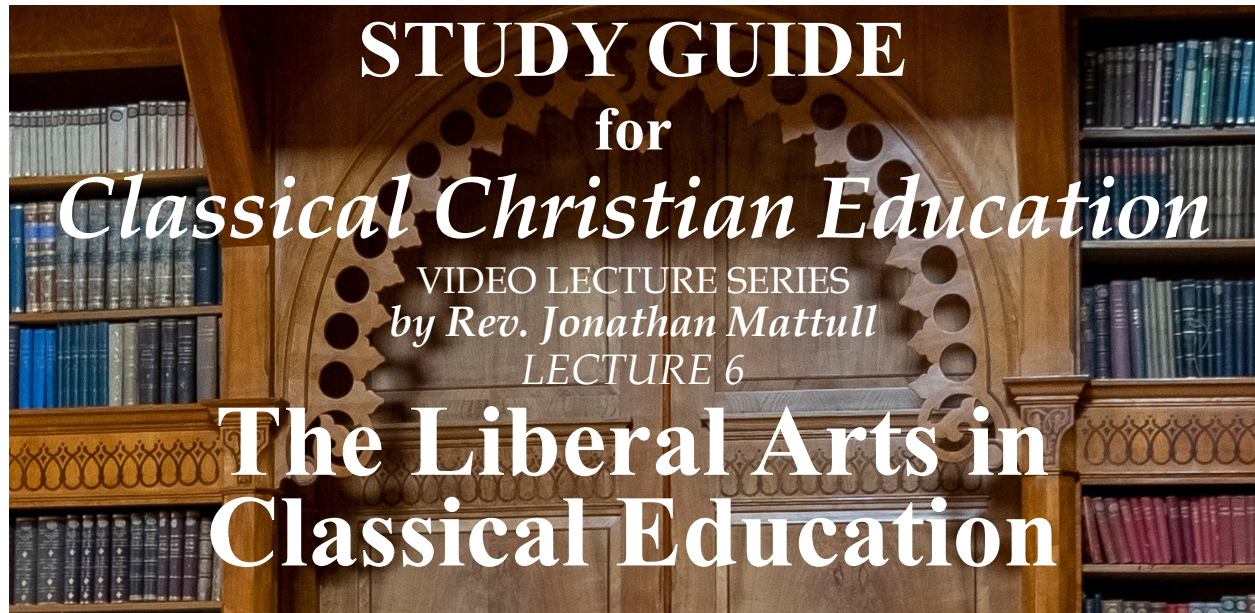
Visit our website: [www.johnknoxinstitute.org](http://www.johnknoxinstitute.org)

Rev. Jonathan Mattull is minister of the gospel at Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, in St. Louis, Missouri, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

[stlpresbyterian.org](http://stlpresbyterian.org)



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

With this lesson, we enter the core of Classical Christian Education. Throughout history, Classical Education has often been referred to as a *Liberal Arts* education. Now, this is true of non-Christian ancients, as Pathagoras, Euclid, Plato, and it also includes Christian educators, and those who have written on the subject, as Chrysostom, and Augustine, and many others besides. We could go into the late Middle Ages, into the Reformation—John Calvin and Philip Melanthon, and many others would have understood what was meant by Classical Education as something that referred to the Liberal Arts. When we speak of Classical Education, we’re referring to *the Liberal Arts*.

### Theme

Defining and explaining the Liberal Arts.

### Key Points

1. The Identity of the *Liberal Arts*.
  - a. *Liberal Arts* refers to seven particular arts that one was to master to become a well-educated person.
    - 1) The term “art” refers to a particular skill to be mastered. Today we call it “fine arts.”
    - 2) If one mastered the art, then one had the “liberty” to use that skill in all of life.
  - b. There are seven *Liberal Arts*; divided into two groups—the *trivium*, and the *quadrivium*.
  - c. The *trivium* refers to a place where three roads meet— there are three arts.
    - 1) *Grammar, logic, and rhetoric*.
    - 2) The *trivium* leads the student toward mastery of thinking and speaking.

- d. The *quadrivium* refers to a place where four roads meet—there are four arts.
- 1) *Arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy* (the *mathematical arts*).
  - 2) The *quadrivium* leads the student to mastery of the physical world of space and time, the order and harmony of the created world.
- e. *Grammar* refers to all that is related to words.
- 1) Their origin, formation, combination, inflection, pronunciation.
  - 2) Spelling, sounds of letters, parts of speech, and how words relate to one another.
- f. *Logic* develops right thinking and sound reasoning.
- 1) *Logic* is fundamentally a language art.
  - 2) Students learned to master deductive and inductive reasoning.
  - 3) Students learned abstract thinking relating to language.
- g. *Rhetoric* is about how to employ *grammar* and *logic* to present truth beautifully and persuasively.
- 1) Aristotle—for learning to see the available means of persuasion.
  - 2) Quintilian—it is the science of speaking well.
  - 3) Others taught that true rhetoric was for leading men to embrace the truth.
- h. *Arithmetic* deals with numbers, what they mean, what they represent.
- 1) Not just adding and subtracting—but numeric patterns.
  - 2) Unity and diversity; the one and the many.
  - 3) How numbers related to one another
  - 4) Ways to see truth in the universe.
- i. *Music* was a way of applying number.
- 1) The ancients saw how number relates to music and musical patterns.
  - 2) The relationship between sounds—harmony, dissonant sounds.
  - 3) It taught students to discern objective truths for beauty.
- j. *Geometry* considers the relationship between theoretical points and lines and other dimensional ideas, like area and volume.
- 1) The ancients used *geometry* to train the mind, to form proofs.
  - 2) Trained students how think abstractly.
  - 3) Taught students how to see objective truth.
- k. *Astronomy* is about the ability to understand size, dimension, shape, and apply these things to observable bodies in the sky—the sun, moon, planets, and stars.
- 1) To see the placement of heavenly bodies, patterns of travel and movement.

- 2) To mark out the calendar by the heavenly bodies.
- 3) To discern the wonders of God's world and how abstract notions of *arithmetic* and *geometry* apply to real things in the world.

## 2. The Purpose of the *Liberal Arts*.

- a. Forms and develops the student's understanding, discernment, and engagement in the world.
- b. Matures the student's ability to discern and employ truth.
- c. Provides necessary skills to learn more; it is the foundation for all future learning.
- d. Teaches the student to think well.
- e. Servile arts versus *Liberal Arts*.
- f. The *Liberal Arts* is aimed at developing mature adults who are wise, just, courageous, and self-controlled.

## 3. The Use of *Liberal Arts*.

- a. For fifty years, some have misrepresented the arts as "stages of learning." Based on an essay by Dorothy Sayers in the 1900s, some redefined Classical Education as having stages of learning.
  - 1) A grammar stage for early years—memorize and recite.
  - 2) A logic stage for years 10 to 14—students develop connections between ideas, how things relate.
  - 3) A rhetoric stage for years 14 to 18—students learn how to present themselves well.
- b. Arguments for rejecting the "stages of learning" in Classical Education.
  - 1) Classical Education should emphasize *grammar*, *logic* and *rhetoric* as subjects, not stages, not part of a stage of development.
  - 2) Stages of development are real, but not to become a *grammar* stage, a *logic* stage, and a *rhetoric* stage.
- c. We should reclaim the meaning of Classical Education and the *Liberal Arts*.
  - 1) Education today has a careless approach to words and their relationship, contrasted with the care, precision, and attention given by the ancients.
  - 2) Compare the fruit of Classical Education in our forefathers versus the fruits of our current day. They were well-rounded, beautifully-spoken, well-read men and women because of their mastery of these *Liberal Arts*.
  - 3) We need to pursue growth as teachers, administrators, and communities.
  - 4) We must pray that the Lord would help us in pursuit of Classical Christian Education.

*Study Questions*

1. What meaning do the words “art” and “liberal” have in reference to the *Liberal Arts*.

---

---

---

---

2. The seven *Liberal Arts* are divided into what two groups? What is the meaning of the name of each group? What is the focus of mastery for each group?

---

---

---

---

3. What arts are included in the *trivium*? Describe the studies of each of these arts.

---

---

---

---

---

4. Which of the arts are included in the *quadrivium*? Describe the studies of each of these arts.

---

---

---

---

---

5. What is the purpose of the *Liberal Arts*, and why is it worth emphasizing again and again? What are some of the individual benefits?

---

---

---

---

---

6. What do we mean by the phrase “the servile arts”? What is the aim, or end goal of the servile arts? How does that differ from the end goal of the *Liberal Arts*?

---

---

---

---

---

7. Briefly describe the “stages of learning” as described in this lecture. How long has this been in effect? Where was the idea derived?

---

---

---

---

---

8. What is the right use of the trivium of *grammar*, *logic*, and *rhetoric*? Would the ancient educators have approved of this new idea of the “stages of learning”?

---

---

---

---

9. What are the arguments in favor of reclaiming Classical Education and the *Liberal Arts* today?

---

---

---

---

---

10. Why is it important for us to pray to the Lord for help, not only for our students, but for ourselves, as teachers, administrators, communities, and parents, that God would bless us in our labors, as we serve our children and students?

---

---

---

---

---

**Further Study**

1. Thinking about the “the fruits of our forefathers, the kinds of men and women that Classical Education produced,” and the fruits of our current day, what are some of the contrasts you see?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Are you already familiar with the “stages of learning” discussed in this lecture? Perhaps you may even embrace it as a fundamental principle of Classical Education today? How has this lecture helped you better understand the need to reclaim Classical Education in the way that our forefathers gave it to us?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---