

STUDY GUIDE

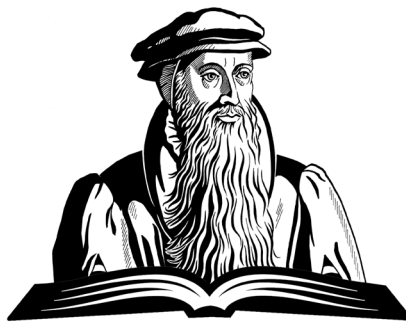
for

Classical Christian Education

Video Lecture Series
by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

LECTURE #7

The Importance of Language in Classical Education



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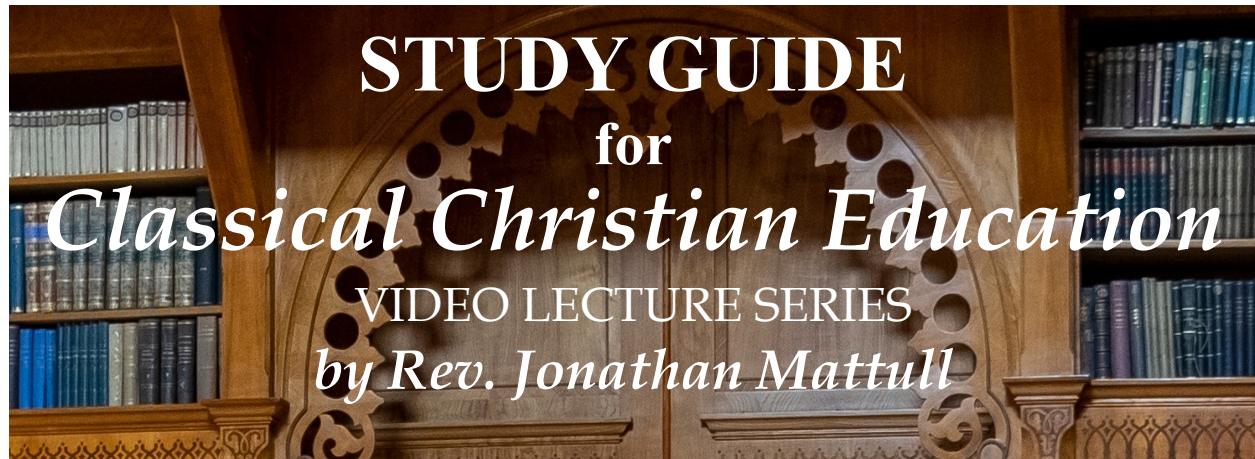
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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

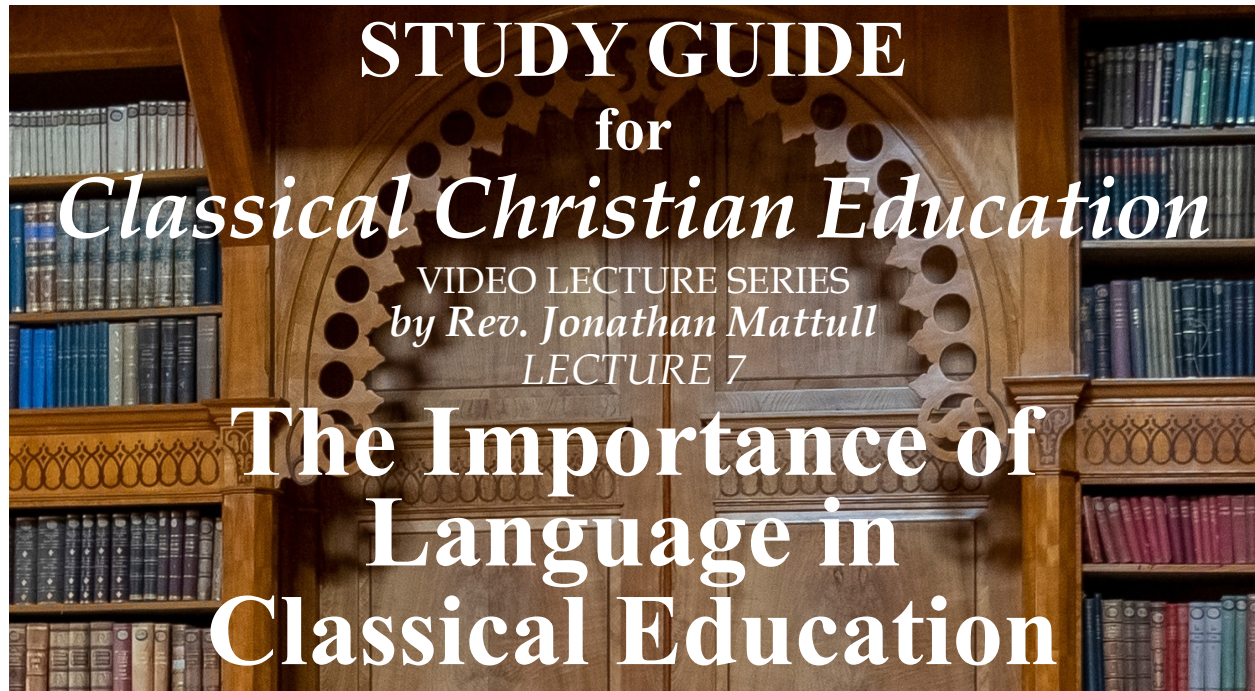
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1. An Introduction to Classical Christian Education
2. Christian Commitments in Education
3. Classical Elements for Education from Antiquity
4. Reading Authors from Antiquity with Discernment and Benefit
5. How Christ Transforms Classical Education
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

Few people see the need to give much attention to learning languages today, much less the need to try and master a language. After all, with the assistance of online support, a poorly written essay can be corrected and edited after a few clicks on the keyboard. Apart from very few exceptions today, most schools consider diagramming sentences to be a waste of time. This contrasts with the long-standing practice of prior approaches to education, where the bulk of education focused on learning parts of speech, diagramming sentences, and other such related work. With the advent of artificial intelligence, there are programs being developed that allow for nearly instantaneous translation. Some look at the hard work of mastering language as a foolish waste of time today. But mastering language is a goal of Classical Christian Education, both our vernacular, but also, and preeminently, the Classical languages of Greek and Latin.

Theme

Mastering of language is a goal of Classical Christian Education.

Key Points

1. The Goal of Mastering Language.
 - a. Why should mastering language be our goal?
 - 1) God made man to communicate by means of words.
 - 2) For man to communicate truth well, he must use words well.
 - b. God has communicated all truth to us in the Bible.

- 1) We should be careful not to change the Bible's words, for they are God's words to us.
- c. God's Word models for us the importance of expressing ourselves with the right words.
 - 1) This demands intimate acquaintance with truth, and awareness of our audience.
- 2. The Pathway for Mastering Language.
 - a. *Comprehensive training* in the Language Arts.
 - 1) What language is, how it functions, how to use it well.
 - 2) Mastery of letters, sounds, vocabulary, meanings, cases, parts of speech.
 - b. *Intensive training* throughout the *Comprehensive Training*.
 - 1) A deeply focused and thorough study of language.
 - 2) The *progymnasmata*, with fourteen phases of exercises to develop skills of storytelling, description, comparison, argumentation, etc.
 - 3) The intensity of focus on language skills is connected to the intention of cultivating virtue.
- 3. The Classical Languages and Their Relation to Mastering Language Itself.
 - a. Greek and Latin are the Classical languages.
 - 1) These were the languages of all the ancient Classical writers.
 - 2) Greek was the language of the New Testament.
 - 3) Greek was the language of the early church fathers.
 - 4) Latin remained the Language used in the West up to the 18th century.
 - 5) Latin was the foundation for Spanish, Italian and French.
 - 6) German borrows from Latin.
 - 7) More than 50% of English words come from Latin words.
 - 8) Latin is used in medicine, law, and other vocations.
 - b. Two reasons to study these languages to promote mastery.
 - 1) It provides entrance into and reception of the Classical culture.
 - 2) There is great delight to be found in reading the Classical writers.
- 4. Conclusion: this is an opportunity to examine how well we prioritize language.

Study Questions

- 1. What are the implications of the fact that God created man to communicate verbally?

2. What skills are required for a man to be able to communicate truth well? How does the study of Classical language develop those skills?

3. God communicates his truths to us by his inspired written Word, the Bible. Why is it important that we do not change or edit the Bible, or produce simplified versions of his words?

4. Mark Twain said, “The difference between the almost-right word and the right word is really a large matter.” Exactly what did he mean by that? What part of grammar study helps us learn the “right words” to use when we communicate our thoughts and ideas?

5. What studies are included in *comprehensive training* of the Language Arts?

6. What is meant by *intensive training* in terms of mastering language? What type of exercises are included? How does it relate to the intention of cultivating virtue in students?

7. What are the Classical languages? What are some of the pragmatic reasons for studying them?

8. How do the Classical languages provide an entrance into and a reception of the Classical culture? Can you give a brief example? What special benefits are there for Christians who understand these languages?

9. Rev. Mattull said that one reason for studying the Classical languages is that it brings “*delight*” to the student. What did he mean by this?

10. From Rev. Mattull’s closing remarks, how important is it for us to be careful how we express ourselves? What does it have to do with the Word of God? Why should we prize language and teach our children to use language well?

Further Study

1. Do you have experience in the mastery of a Classical language, or any language foreign to you? How did you go through the study, and what benefits did you gain from that study? How would you encourage others to learn a different language? Are you interested in learning the Classical languages? Do you have good materials for that?

2. Rev. Mattull spoke about “*delight*” being a reason for learning to read the Classical writers in their language. Have you experienced that in your own language studies? How would you persuade your students to pursue that *delight*?
