

In the “junior high” years, most children revel in questioning everything; and, as you probably know well, they love to argue. In this capacity they thrive on dialectic. During these years the emphasis of education shifts; we challenge them to question and probe and think about how their grammatical knowledge works together. It is here that formal logic is taught.

Finally, when most children enter the high school years, they begin to exercise—however great or dismal—the art of self-expression. Classical education capitalizes on this innate desire and seeks to teach them beautiful and truthful self-expression in all subjects (i.e., rhetoric) through writing, public speaking, debate, drama, art, etc.

Distinctive #3: Classical education has a language and word bias. Language is a key element that not only distinguishes man from the animal kingdom, but also is undoubtedly a part of how we bear God’s image. Consider that God himself has chosen to communicate to us through the written Word; Christians, by necessity, must understand language. Moreover, Jesus Christ himself is referred to as the “Word” made flesh (John 1:14).

Classical education vigorously embraces these truths. Therefore, with all subjects, we strive to become masters of the words used to communicate truths about the subject. So, for example, this word bias explains why Latin is taught and why English grammar is stressed; additionally, it justifies the emphasis on reading and writing skills.

This emphasis sharply contrasts with the world’s relativistic mindset. The prevalent view in academia today is that there is no such thing as absolute truth; and, it is claimed, language itself is the ultimate tool of relativism. Scriptural language emphasis, on the other hand, affirms that language, though flawed, can and does convey absolute truth. It is God’s gift to us to use for His glory.

Distinctive #4: Classical education has a history bias. Scriptures repeatedly admonish God’s people to not forget what God has done for them. Classical education embraces this biblical concept and considers all study and subjects in light of its history. Consider God’s words to king Nebuchadnezzar: “The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes (Daniel 4: 32b).” History is God’s history. As such, it is important that we consider all history (not just biblical history) in the light of God’s providence.

Additionally, it is important to realize that God not only directs history, but history is there for our instruction. St. Paul, when referring to the history of God’s people, states that, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us (i.e., the Church) on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come (I Cor. 10: 11).”

Great education will apply these principles in all fields of study. With history we not only see the hand of God, but we learn from its mistakes and triumphs.

Distinctive #5: Classical education strives to only use the truly great aspects of our culture as its curriculum. Now that we know we want our children to memorize grammar, what sort of stuff constitutes this grammar? What is the substance of the curriculum? These questions are especially

