



Intelligence Plus Character

The Importance of Classical Christian Education

By Chuck Colson as aired on BreakPoint

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"Education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. . . . We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

Chuck Colson

You may remember that I quoted these lines, which come from Martin Luther King, Jr., when I was talking about a student's convocation speech at Dartmouth College. But they are worth pondering, because they raise a very profound question: How, in today's society, do we provide the kind of "true education" that King was talking about, that develops both character and intelligence?

Never have we needed more urgently to find an answer to this question. The modern secular university cannot cultivate character in a value-free environment, because if there is no truth, there is no standard of ethics by which we can measure character. So the university has simply given up on it.

And not only are our schools and colleges not teaching character, but they're increasingly abandoning academics as well. The typical student at a great secular university will not learn much about the history of Western civilization. My alma mater, Brown University, an Ivy League school with a great reputation, no longer has a core curriculum. You can go through the school without ever knowing who Plato, Aristotle, Darwin, or Freud were. In fact, you could major in African drum-beating. So from my perspective, the modern secular university has abandoned both the pursuit of classical learning and the development of character. That's why they're particularly dangerous places today, and it's why Christian students must be well grounded before they go there.

And this is also why I so strongly support the Christian classical education movement that is beginning to spread across the country. It combines, you see, the two historic goals of a liberal education: the cultivation of knowledge and the cultivation of character. It shows us the continuum in the intellectual history of the West that goes back to the Greco-Roman era and, therefore, enables us to better understand our own postmodern era. If we cut ourselves off from the past, we can't understand the present. And it's particularly critical, in my mind, for Christians to understand the philosophical and cultural currents that have shaped our society.

Let me give you just one good example. Galileo, as everyone knows, was thrown in jail for challenging Aristotle's philosophical assumptions about an eternal universe. But, as I mentioned in an earlier broadcast, Francis Bacon, sometimes called "the father of modern science," was influenced by the Protestant Reformation, and he embraced Luther's idea about abandoning the constraints of tradition and going back to the root: the Bible. He applied this principle to freeing science from philosophical assumptions and instead looking at what God has made—go back to the root of things, as Luther did. This allowed modern science to pursue truth uninhibited by philosophy.

Why is this relevant today? Because we're dealing with the same issue. Naturalism is the philosophical assumption that binds modern science. And this is at the heart of the intelligent design debate, but you only see this when you know your own history.

I believe that every serious Christian needs to be classically grounded, not only to understand the history of our own civilization, but also to contend for truth in the marketplace. So I hope that you will check for a classical Christian school in your area—as a place for your kids and as a cause to support.

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Spend a year studying with Chuck Colson: Learn how to identify, advocate, and apply biblical truth in every arena of life. [Apply for the 2006 Centurions Program](#). The NEW deadline is November 28.

Dorothy L. Sayers, "[The Lost Tools of Learning](#)," 1948. Reprinted by Classical Homeschooling, Spring 2001.

Visit the website for the [Association of Classical and Christian Schools](#) to learn about classical Christian schools in your area.

See the winter 2004 issue of Findings, "[Christianity in the Academy](#)."

BreakPoint Commentary No. 051017, "[Truly Special: Education and Character](#)."

BreakPoint Commentary No. 051101, "[Desperate Measures: The Evolutionist Establishment Turns to Blackmail](#)."

BreakPoint Commentary No. 031219, "[Lost and Found: Modern Science and Ancient Faith](#)."

BreakPoint Commentary No. 031222, "[A New Ending to an Old Story: Following the Plot Twists](#)."

BreakPoint Commentary No. 021028, "[Of Science and Religion: What Really Got Galileo into Trouble](#)."

BreakPoint Commentary No. 030605, "[Putting Worldview to Work: Christ and Culture Week at Covenant Life School](#)."

Kenneth G. Elzinga, "[Christian Academe vs. Christians in Academe](#)," Inside Higher Ed, 30 September 2005.

Ken Myers, "[The Idea of the University](#)," BreakPoint WorldView, April 2004.

"[Discovering Truth in the Great Books](#)" (CD)—BreakPoint Managing Editor Jim Tonkowich speaks with Dr. Thomas Dillon, president of Thomas Aquinas College about the value of a classical liberal arts education.

David S. Dockery, Ph.D., "[Integrating Faith and Learning in Higher Education](#)," speech delivered September 20, 2000.

Arthur F. Holmes, Ph.D., "[Wanted: Christian Scholars!](#)" BreakPoint WorldView, July/August 2003.

T. M. Moore, "[A Faculty of Fools](#)," BreakPoint WorldView, October 2002.

"[Can the Ivy League Teach Ethics?](#)"—Charles Colson's speech at Brown University's 2003 commencement weekend.