

BCL ep323 LCan Education Save Civilization? with Dr. Louis Markos

What is the real purpose of education? Is it about transferring information or about shaping the human soul? Today's guest, Dr. Louis Marcus, joins us to unpack his newest book, *Passing the Torch*, a call to recover the heart of classical Christian education, drawing from the voices as ancient as Plato and as modern as C.S. Lewis. In a world increasingly detached from meaning and virtue, Marcus invites us to imagine a different kind of education, one that forms morally self-regulating citizens and cultivates deep wisdom. It's what the world needs right now more than ever.

Join us for this episode of Basecamp Live. Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation. Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings.

We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation. Welcome to Basecamp Live. Now your host, Davies Owens.

Welcome to another episode of Basecamp Live. Davies Owens, your host here with you on the journey of raising the next generation with classical Christian education. If for some reason you didn't hear last week's episode, I encourage you to go back and give it a listen.

It's one of the topics that's always near and dear to my heart. It really drives me in terms of calling, and that is the important connections that have to happen between our homes and our churches and our classical Christian schools. It's really what I call the holy trifacta, and it's really critical that we lock arms or row the boat together, whatever analogy you want to use, as we raise the next generation.

And so that connection and communication is so important. I mentioned last week that there is a national survey that I'm putting together, and I would love school leaders, if you take just a moment to fill that out, I'm kind of compiling all that information. I'll share it back with you just in terms of the ways that schools are connecting best with parents, and parents, we certainly want your input as well.

You can go to zipcast.media, our Zipcast website, and there's a button at the top for the National Communication Survey. Speaking of Zipcast, we also mentioned in last week's episode just the excitement of Zipcast 2.0. We're calling it with a lot more features, but it's really a very significant tool in giving schools an opportunity for connecting your voice as the school to your parents. It's all about connecting with one another.

You can learn more over at zipcast.media. This week, we're having a conversation with a no stranger to Basecamp Live, Dr. Louis Marcos, and his newest book, *Passing the Torch*. He is a professor of English and Scholar in Residence at the Houston Christian University, where he is not only teaching every day, but a prolific writer, as he'll share with you. He's written 27 books, over 300 essays, and about 300 public lectures.

He's a frequent speaker at the SEL and ACCS conferences, and has two grown children. He lives in Houston and is just an incredible voice in our movement, and this new book does a fantastic job of framing for all of us, yet again, the value and the importance of classical Christian education and this passing of the torch to the next generation. Before we get into the episode, just a quick shout out to a couple folks, Kathy Guerra, head of school at Lighthouse Christian Academy in Stevensville, Maryland.

Kathy, greetings to you and all of your families and teachers and many there that listen to Basecamp Live each week, along with being a part of the Zipcast family, as well as Del Cook, head of school at Sandhills Classical Christian School in Whispering Pines, North Carolina. Again, Del, thanks for your support of this podcast and Zipcast and just being a part of the important work that we do everywhere around the country of raising the next generation. This episode is sponsored by Classical Academic Press, the Classic Learning Test and Life Architects Coaching.

Check out all of the resources that they provide on our partners page, as well as going directly to their websites. But more than anything, we're grateful for their support of this important work that all of us are doing every day. And without further ado, let's jump into this important conversation with Dr. Louis Marcus.

Well, Louis Marcus, welcome back to Basecamp Live. It is good to be back again. Always love it.

Yeah, you are no stranger. We've been doing this for eight years, and I think we've had you on at least eight times, so it's about time to get you back. And what a great time to have you back on.

I've got here in my hands the hot off the press from InterVarsity Press, the newest book, *Passing the Torch, an Apology for Classical Christian Education*. So congrats on what book is this for you and your lineup? This is my 27th published book. Wow.

Well done. And in September, from Aristotle to Christ, comes out from InterVarsity Press. All right.

It's been pushing me hard this year. Yeah. You are a prolific writer, to say the least.

Well, let's jump into this book. First of all, for some folks listening, we always have fun in our Christian circles talking about an apology. You're not apologizing for classical Christian education.

And I'll tell you something funny. My original title was *The Case for Classical Christian Education*. But we realized that our mutual friend, Doug Wilson, already used that title.

But we switched it to the apology, because, yes, apology as in Socrates' apology. Of course. It's a defense, an apologia.

As an apologist gives a logical defense of the Christian faith and the Christian worldview. Absolutely. I am giving a defense of, again, classical and everything it stands for.

Which I'm so glad you are. And there's nothing to apologize for, in fact. That's right.

We're more excited than we've ever been. And it's a perfect timing in your book. I mean, the movement is alive.

I think a real revival is breaking out around the world as people are coming into this classical Christian discovery. So maybe just the first question, and I'm sure you're asked this often, just, hey, Lou, what's the difference in modern education and classical Christian education? What's the answer? Modern education is best called progressive education or utilitarian or pragmatic education. And we set that over against classical and especially classical Christian education.

Some of the ways we often talk about this, going back to John Dewey, progressive education is supposed to be child or student centered, whereas classical education is teacher centered. Not because we're autocrats, but because the doctor knows what pills to give you. They can't just come and say, just choose whatever pill looks pretty to you.

We also believe not in fashionable ideas. We believe in passing down the tradition. John Dewey was suspicious, and they are today, of what he called ready made truths.

We're not there to pass on the superstitions of the past. We're here to be progressive and fashionable and moving forward. Whereas traditional classical Christian education wants to pass down the tradition that has been entrusted to us.

Also, we believe in passing down knowledge is even more important than experience. We are not against experiences, a lot of experiential stuff in true classical education. But our primary focus is to pass down knowledge and the tradition, particularly as it is filtered through the great books of the Western intellectual tradition, including, of course, the Bible.

Well said. And you talk in the book about classical Christian is uniquely producing a morally self-regulating citizen. So again, it's not just I've got job skills to go hit the market and make some money.

The enterprise before us is really forming a human soul. I mean, it's a self-regulating. Talk more about that, because that's a very noble and important goal.

There's a great irony here, Davies. The progressive education is a kind of social engineering, but it's a kind of social engineering that is producing young people that cannot continue the democracy as we've known it. Ironically, we are the ones that do care about the democracy because we're creating the only kind of virtuous, morally self-regulating citizens who can control themselves and regulate themselves.

See, true conservatism means putting limits and conserving things, right? A bad conservative is

one that becomes like a police state. But true conservatism means proper education, proper family, proper church. We become morally self-regulating.

And so you don't have to impose laws from the outside. But what happens is when we lose virtue and only care about values which come and go, then you end up needing the police state to stop you from self-destructive behavior. So we are trying to equip people with the, obviously the critical thinking skills to make decisions, but also the virtuous habits to allow them to discern things and not be self-destructive.

And especially with the great books does that. The whole classical Christian model does that better than what we've had for the last hundred years. Well, and I've often said somewhat provocatively, I mean, I believe classical Christian education is the last best hope for Western civilization.

I mean, this is... I think it is. I think it is. And you know, my friend Ravi Jain, you know, they wrote the liberal arts tradition.

They were helping to open up schools in China. And Davies, if we can get classical Christian schools in China, we have killed two birds with one stone. First, we have brought the gospel.

But second, we have brought the only foundation upon which any kind of democracy can actually be built. You know, back with George W., I was naive and thought, oh yes, we're going to build democracies in the Middle East. You can't, because there's no foundation to allow the people to morally self-regulate themselves.

And so it didn't work. And it's not going to work in the Soviet Union. I don't know if it can ever work in Russia or China, but it's not going to work unless you have that kind of education that equips people not to think for themselves, but to think rightly.

Well, this is such a... I mean, it's a significant point. And I think so often we think of kind of classical education, classical Christian is just sort of polite, nostalgic. You know, we think about some big ideas, but we're talking about the future of our civilization.

We're talking about the formation of our children's souls. And so you also talk in the book about, really, the starting point is just understanding really at a base level, what does it mean to be human? And what do we need as humans? So talk about that for a second. Well, one of the things that's unique, I mean, the book has two main sections, the nature of education and the nature of the education dialogue.

But I've got a lengthy introduction that's about what is the nature of man? Because if you don't know who we are, how are you gonna educate us? So I go over 10 things grounded in the idea that we are made in God's image, and therefore we have infinite value worth that's intrinsic to us, right? We could be a child that has an IQ of 20, but we have intrinsic worth because we're made in the image of God. But at the same time, we are fallen and depraved, and we need limits. I call that Christian realism.

I just call it realism. That's who we are. When you forget that we were made in the image of God, and you fall into a Darwinian natural selection, then education becomes classroom management and nothing else, teaching people how to survive.

When you lose the idea that we're fallen, when you become like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and think that man is born free, but is everywhere in chains, that we're naturally good, but corrupted by society, then that leads to social engineering. In either case, the child is not educated. But I talk about other things.

I say that we are incarnational beings. Jesus is fully God and fully man. We're not that, but we are fully physical and fully spiritual.

We are not souls trapped in a body. We are in flesh souls. We are dual beings.

But we have not, so often Christians, Davies, have fallen into this false notion, often called dualism, that our soul is good and our body is bad. That is absolutely not Christian. I absolutely love, *It's a Wonderful Life*.

I published a book on movies this summer called *My Life in Film*. And I spent a long time in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Great movie, terrible theology.

We do not become angels when we die. And when we think that, when we forget that we are embodied creatures, I think that is leading directly to what's called the war on boys, where they expect boys to act like girls and all they do is put them on Ritalin and terrible drugs. And I hope Bobby Kennedy's gonna help us with that.

And you forget that we are in fleshed souls and that our body and our soul needs to be trained. Davies, I just saw on Facebook, I don't know if it's true or not, that Texas is about to pass a law that we have to have PE again. Phys Ed, the kids need to go out and exercise.

It's very important. It doesn't mean they're only gonna become athletes, but they need to get out and exercise because we are bodily creatures. That's right.

Well, and I think about most of us as adults, if we had to sit through it, most kids have to sit through it on a normal day in a 50 minute classes and three minute passing periods and do that for five hours. We'd all be bouncing off the lights ourselves. Well, we're gonna take a break in a minute, but before we do, I wanna kind of set up you in the book, go into some, what you call the essential elements that make classical Christian education so unique.

Maybe just, why don't we get one and then we'll come back over the break and do a few more. But you began by talking about just, I think a fairly obvious distinction is that we really believe in these things called the great books, rather than what so often maybe many of us experience, the anthologies or the textbooks. Why is that such a big deal? The way I title it in my book is we are canonical, not ideological.

We don't choose books that are fashionable and out there and full of outrage. We work with the great books of the Western intellectual tradition. Homer, Virgil, Dante, the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas.

I can go on. The great books of the Western intellectual tradition. Out of that dialogue, the West was created.

Europe is a creation. When Augustine took the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman and put it together, he created Europe. And then of course, the EU refuses to mention anything about Christianity.

There is no Europe without Christendom, without Christianity. And in a way, we classical Christian evangelicals are the true medieval Catholics in a weird way because we are trying to restore the foundation of who we are. And we believe that those books are there, not because they're written by dead white male heterosexuals, but because they have wrestled with the big questions.

Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? How do I know of value? What is goodness, truth and beauty? What is a good man? What is a good citizen? What is good nature? All of these things. And we enter into that dialogue when we have a classical Christian school and we wrestle, not just with the Christian, but with the pre-Christian and it even includes people like Marx, Freud and Darwin. We can't understand what's happening unless we've read them and Nietzsche as well.

But the foundation is that great dialogue that let's put it this way, that our founding fathers read, particularly the writers of the Federalist Papers. And that's how they created this country out of that dialogue. Well, and I'm, as folks are listening, I'm a big fan of Charlotte Mason.

I know she comes up later in your book, but one of these Mason is a big, and talks a lot about the difference between what she calls twaddle, which is just sort of the modern pre-digested textbooks and the great books that have what she talks about as you are living ideas. These are, she even at one point says that these ideas can be so transformative. They can possess us.

You're having this mind on mind engagement, almost like a time machine travel back to sit at the foot of these great thinkers and these great, great individuals to your point to answer questions that have stood the test of time. So textbooks are not exactly the same thing. If they- No, no, in textbooks they bend the past, you know, they give us little bits, snippets.

Now it would be nice if we could read them in the original languages. We do read them in translation, but other than that, we are directly wrestling with them and not having them filtered through our own modern prejudice and fashionable ideas as you have the textbooks. Yeah, yeah.

It's pretty, we've got pre-packaged food and we got pre-packaged books. Like, let's go back to,

you know, healthy food and healthy books. I love it.

Let's take a quick break. I want to come back and we're going to hit a few more of these essential elements you talk about in the book. There's a lot of them and I think we're going to resonate with them because most of us have been on that journey through modern education and now we're discovering the power of a classical Christian education.

We'll be right back with Lou Marcos. Hi, this is Dr. Christopher Perrin with Classical Academic Press. Grammar is a critical tool for a student's development that enables them to write, read, and speak with clarity, brevity, and precision.

The well-ordered language series from Classical Academic Press is designed for grades three through seven and it will kindle the curiosity of students to learn and understand the structure of language, how it works, enabling them to order and enjoy language, all language. Visit classicalacademicpress.com and use the discount code BASECAMP live to save 20% off your next purchase. Well, Lou, there's a lot of things we can talk about.

I do hope folks get a copy of this book because we're not going to do more than just touch on a few of these really rich topics you address, including the real question around what are the essential elements that make a classical Christian education so unique? So we're talking about the difference before the break on great books versus textbooks. What are some other distinctives you point out in the book? Well, let's kind of talk about this and this may get people upset, but true classical Christian education is grounded in humanities and especially in literature, history, and philosophy, whereas modern progressive is all social science driven. They don't care about history.

They only care about social studies. Now, I learned some cool things about the Native American Indians in social studies, but I learned nothing about history. It's anthropology, it's psychology, it's social, what do you call that, sociology.

It's got nothing to do. They don't know history. And look, when you don't know history, when you're not grounded in history, you could be fooled by any propaganda.

Think of how many young people think socialism's a cool idea. Have you not studied the last hundred years? That's all you need to do to find out it's been a failure wherever it's gone. So we are grounded in the humanities now for two reasons.

First of all, the humanities are grounded in the idea that we are made in God's image, we're fallen. Even when they're not believers, they understand that we have native, naked dignity, but that we are also self-destructive. Whereas in the social sciences, it's basically the idea of identity politics.

We're part of groups that are oppressor or oppressed. We're not individual. We are not even really have free will.

We are products of socioeconomic forces that are beyond us, right? Often they're material forces, if you're a Marxist. And how can you educate somebody that way? So the humanities give us the proper understanding of man, but they also supply us with the proper dialogue. Humanities is generally a mixture of history, literature, philosophy, a little bit of theology, art and music, things like that brought together, which give us a foundation to understand ourselves, both our greatness and our self-destructive danger.

And again, the trouble though is, and again, just like if I was a lawyer, I would have to apologize for myself often as, and that's the negative apology. I also, as an English teacher, I have to, because the humanities have been destroying universities because we've completely drunk the social science Kool-Aid. We have pathetically sought after the social sciencing, thinking that if we got the word science in our name, we would suddenly be serious and scientific, which we're not at all.

And so I hate to say it, but humanity, but people hear I'm an English professor and I'm conservative. They're like, what are you talking about, right? Because unfortunately too often the humanities have bought this idea that truth is relative and you do anything you want. So we are grounded in studying the great books, but first we have a foundation of history and a foundation of geography.

So that in the grammar phase, so that's a grammar school or lower school, we are giving them the facts, the figures, the dates, the battles. They need that foundation. We have to have memorization at the core, but then we build on it, right? Then we build on, let's look at biographies.

Let's look at the people who shaped history, whose decisions were good or bad in terms of history. Then as we move to the rhetoric level, then we can start talking about the politics and power and choices and patterns and things like that. But we need to build slowly through that.

But if we can't locate ourselves within history, within the dialogue, within the philosophical dialogue, then we are adrift and very easy to manipulate. Well, and that's a, you know, as you make these comparisons in classical schools, we often talk about the truth, goodness, and beauty and the fact that we have to be anchored to something external to ourselves. I mean, what you're describing is really, not only do schools today typically use textbooks, but the assumption is there is no transcendent truth.

And it's kind of that Stanley Fish deconstructionist thing where it's basically, it doesn't even matter what the author intended. It's what you decide it means for you. I mean, this is the modern moment we're in.

And in contrast, we're saying, no, we actually believe in transcendent truth, which is truth, goodness, and beauty. So again, that's a big distinctive. Share a little bit more on that comparing to relativism, which is, yeah.

Relative, okay. Goodness, we talk about goodness. We're talking about morality and ethics and modern education is morally and ethically relative.

It's about values, not virtue. We can talk about that later. Then when we talk about truth, we're talking about philosophy and theology, what is right and wrong, rather than what is good and bad.

But we've also become philosophically relativist. Whatever you believe is fine. And beauty, and this is one of my soap boxes here, Davies.

Whenever I speak for evangelicals and I talk about absolute standards of goodness, truth, and beauty, they're tracking with me with goodness and truth. But when I mentioned beauty, oh no, no, no, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. We don't understand we've completely bought into something that is finally unchristian, but we confuse taste with beauty.

Everybody has a personal taste in food and things like that. But there are standards of beauty, a certain kind of balance or harmony. And when we teach students in classical Christian schools, it's not just about do's and don'ts.

It's about conforming the person so they come into the right relationship with the goodness, truth, and beauty that God has written into the cosmos, into our soul, into our world. That's how you shape somebody. They're not just memorizing a bunch of don'ts.

Then they become legalists. They're no better than virtue seekers. That's not what we're about.

We're about shaping the character of students. And the humanities do that almost better than anything. And you can only shape them if you have standards, right? If your standard is progress, then you're never gonna get there, Davies, because you get there and then the progress has moved on and the progress has moved.

And there is no stopping place. We are offering touchstones, yardsticks, measuring stones that we can measure things against, not only in goodness and truth, but in beauty as well. Well, and no wonder there's so many high-anxiety, depressed young people today.

If you constantly tell them the highest end of all the world is yourself, it's a pretty depressing place to be. It really is. Suppose like, no, there's something greater than you and there's a God that loves you deeply and you can have confidence moving out into the world and discerning things like beauty, to your point.

Okay, so you mentioned real quickly, I wanna go back to this virtue, which we talk about all the time in our classical schools. And then you heard this values thing. This is kind of the Ben Franklin, we should have values type of muckety-muck that's all over the place these days.

But what's the difference? Oh, I tell you, I used to think, Davies, that the problem with the public schools is that they've thrown out virtue. That's not exactly the problem. If they really threw out

virtue completely, then we would notice that we were empty and we would seek out food.

What they did is they threw out the real virtues, the traditional ones, and replaced them with pseudo virtues, what they call values, diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, multiculturalism, environmental, et cetera. I'm not saying those are evil things, but they have never been the center of virtue. They are fashionable ideas that come and go.

They're negative rather than positive. They do not draw you out of yourself towards the other person. They draw you into yourself so you become an autonomous individual, cut off from your duty to God, to parents, to the nation, to everything, and we just become these tight little bubbles cut off from each other, and extremely anxious.

The anxious generation that doesn't know who they are or where they belong. Jordan Peterson, I'm gonna work hard and retire early so I can spend the rest of my life sipping daiquiris on the beach. And he's not even gonna believe me.

That's fun for about two days, and then you get bored, and then where's the meaning in life? The people are real. Secular people are starting to realize it now. What are you doing? We're not equipping our students to live as human beings.

We may be teaching them some vocational skills, or even though that's not happening now, but we're not equipping them to be, as we said earlier, virtuous, morally self-regulating citizens. Yeah, that's well said. So let's take another break.

I wanna come back and delve into kind of getting our time machine because the second half of your book, you really take us throughout history and sit at the feet of great folks from Plato to Lewis and Sayers and Mason and others and hear their perspective on how this important work of passing the torch takes place in classical education. So we'll be right back after the break and jump in the time machine. We'll be right back.

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One of the wonderful things about being classical Christian folks is that we have centuries of wisdom that we can travel back and hear from the mouths of these great thinkers and leaders and experience the world that they experience. Sometimes it's heroic and sometimes it's tragic, but it teaches us nonetheless. So let's jump in the time machine.

In your book, you start out by taking us back to Plato's Republic. So give us a little sense of what that conversation was like. It's great.

In that second book, I put myself in dialogue with the famous educator and I do it for two reasons. We need a sense of history. We need to engage it, but also I want to model the kind of dialogical thinking that we actually do in a classical Christian school.

We are sitting at the feet of these great people, but that doesn't mean we can't question them, okay? We don't accept everything they say just because they're an authority, but we also don't question authority and throw them out, right? We want to wrestle and learn at their feet and build on what they did. And Plato's Republic is really the beginning of education theory. I mean, there were sophists and we know bits and pieces about them, but you have in the Republic, basically Plato is trying to figure out what is justice and he's interested in what is justice in the human soul, but you can't see that.

So let's take that microcosm and blow it up in a macrocosm. Let's create a perfect state that is perfectly just, then we can work our way back to the individual soul. But if you want a just state, then you need just rulers.

And if you don't have just rulers, you need to educate them properly. And so this is one of the first books in the Western history that has somebody thinking out loud about how to educate. But I think that the most important thing we need to take away from Plato's Republic is not the dialogue part, but the myth, the allegory of the cave.

Most people are familiar with the allegory of the cave. What is the true nature of man? We are like people trapped in the inside of a cave, chained to chairs, looking at the back wall of the cave. And as we look at the back wall of the cave, we see the images of puppets being cast as shadows onto the wall.

And we think that's reality. We spend our whole time looking at the shadows and arguing which shadow will be next back and forth, but we get nowhere. And then one day, one of the prisoners is released and forced to turn around.

And the first thing he does is he sees the fire that's been casting the shadows and he's blinded at first. And he wants to go back to his life. It's like the matrix, but he needs to go forward.

He needs to realize what is the true nature of reality. And as he works his way out of the cave until he gets outside and sees the real things illuminated, not by the fire, but by the sun, he starts to realize what is true, what is eternal. But Plato says, you want to stay outside the cave and just enjoy yourself, but you're going to go back into the cave.

You have to try to wake up the people and free the people that are inside. See, we're not about being woke, but we are about waking up, Davies, okay? We're about waking up to the true nature of our humanity, of God, of nature. And, but he knows, Plato knows that if he tries to rip away the veil of illusion from the eyes of the prisoners, they'll probably turn on him and execute him as they did to Socrates.

And Christians, we often read that as a kind of strange pagan prophecy of Christ, the way he was put to death by the Jews and Romans together. So, we have to understand that education, it does mean passing down knowledge, but it also means opening the eyes to the real nature of things to break out of the illusion. Now, that is our Greco-Roman foundation, right? But in the next chapter, we bring in Augustine, who is very much a Platonist, but is a Christian.

And what he does is he takes Plato's forms, his belief that the real things are outside, and he puts them in the mind of God. And so, Augustine still wants us to seek after absolute standards of goodness, truth, and beauty. But guess what? We're Christians.

We now have the Bible. We now have a God who reveals himself. And yet, Augustine, even though he sees problems with the pagans, as we have to be careful, he was able to learn from them and teach us to learn from them.

And he valued things like eloquence, just because Cicero did it, right? And so, in my dialogue, I'm trying to find out, you know, what is maybe problematic. Obviously, there are problematic things about the pagans, and what is workable, right? And we live in a modern world, though there are gonna be different things, but we're still trying to instill the same virtues. Yeah.

Well, and I've heard it said, in a sense, it's probably oversimplifying what you're saying, but I mean, these early philosophers, the Greeks, and, you know, were really on to the right questions. Like, what does it mean to be human? Who am I as a man? I mean, like, this is the essence of humanity. They couldn't answer that all the way until the gospel, the word comes, and obviously, but the question was properly set so that the answer made sense.

I mean, that's really the reason we're reading these, is they're forcing us to the right questions, right? It also lays the foundation. I've got a book coming out in September called From Aristotle to Christ, and Plato and Aristotle lay out a foundation for how to think logically about things, how to reason about things, how to argue and debate. All of those things are absolutely necessary.

And when we lose that, we can no longer talk to each other. And you're describing the modern world. I mean, civil discourse is gone, the absence of any kind of logical argument.

So this, again, for those who are listening, it may be for the first time really coming to an understanding of classical Christian. I think so often we see great books or it's maybe at a cursory level. They're just harder books, bigger words, fewer pictures.

Let's eat gravel and have a hard, you know, do mental push-ups together. Like, well, there's

some of that. You are having to push yourself a bit to understand sometimes.

But the depth is what you're, the value is what you're describing right now. Is it forcing these questions. Yeah.

Yeah. The fact that they're hard doesn't make them great. Right.

The fact that they are deep and rich. That's it. That's right.

And good. Yeah. And they're asking the right questions absolutely.

Yeah. Some people are like, oh, all that fancy language. I don't like that.

Okay. Well, sometimes it's a, it's an old fashioned translation that's stopping you. Right.

Maybe you need a more modern translation. I put it in a modern idiom, but we need to enter into that dialogue and again, learn and also disagree. You know, I spent a lot of time with Rousseau and John Dewey, both of whom are at the core of modern progressive education.

But I do find some good things in them as well as negative things. Right. I was about to ask you.

Yeah. I was going to ask you because that's really interesting that, you know, kind of the hall of fame here, you picked these two that would typically be, well, they're, they're kind of the bad guys in the story. And yet you're finding some, some redeemable aspects to their own, their questions, their journey.

So yeah. Describe that. Because that's important.

Basically, John Dewey, I'm sorry, we'll start with Rousseau. Yeah. Rousseau's good ideas find their best embodiment in actually Charlotte Mason, who you mentioned before.

Because Charlotte Mason respects the idea of the child in nature, but she's not a fool like Rousseau thinking that there is no original sin and that the child in nature is pure and it's only society that corrupts him. Okay. But she gets this idea.

I mean, if you read Emile and I talk about Emile, there are parts of that that sound like a good homeschooling family, right? Because they're out in nature, they're learning, they're growing. But the trouble is that Rousseau has no understanding of the true nature of man because he's thrown out the idea that we're made in God's image, but fallen. And so what happens is you end up with a dead end in Rousseau.

And you end up with the idea that if it's old, it must be outdated and superstitious and wrong. And if it's new, it must be good. Well, that's not the case.

Some things have improved, but most things have not improved, especially in terms of goodness, truth and beauty. So again, it's good. I like the way he treats the individual child as important and having value.

But even as he does that, he robs us of our eternal and essential value, right? So it's helpful. John Dewey, the good thing about John Dewey, and I do respect him in this sense, he understands that we're an immigrant nation. And he wants to find a way to integrate these immigrants and make them Americans.

That's a good thing. We're unique in the world in that way. And the fact that we try to do that is good.

But he is also against what he calls ready-made truths. He is suspicious of wisdom and tradition that has been handed down. He wants to be, again, student-centered rather than teacher.

He only wants experience. But my last chapter, Davies, I talk about three figures, Mortimer Adler, who's well-known, E.D. Hirsch, who wrote Cultural Literacy, and Neil Postman, who wrote Amusing Ourselves to Death, but he also wrote The End of Education. And especially the last two, E.D. Hirsch and Neil Postman, are, in a sense, liberal, right? But their vision and their influence by doing, but their vision of education still believes that there is a certain content that our students need to learn.

And we can't dismiss it and call it elitist or something like that. We cannot have a working, functioning democracy. And guess what, Davies? The best thing you can do for that poor immigrant to allow him to enter into our culture is to teach him the language of democracy.

That's the only way he can participate in the democracy. And so, that's just an example of where I see both good and bad. And of course, I spent a lot of time on the abolition of MAD, because C.S. Lewis got it all correct.

We'll probably talk about that another day. But C.S. Lewis, and I talk about Dorothy Sayers, because her, it really was a speech and an essay about the lost tools of learning, grammar, she calls it really dialectic, grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, or grammar, logic, rhetoric, was picked up by Doug Wilson, and kind of kicks off the whole modern classical Christian movement. But here's something that your listeners may want to know.

This is how she begins her essay. Some people forget this. Has it ever struck you as odd or unfortunate that today, when the proportion of literacy is higher than it has ever been, people should have become susceptible to the influence of advertisement and mass propaganda to an extent hitherto unheard of and unimagined? Do you put this down to the mere mechanical fact that the press and the radio and so on have made propaganda much easier to distribute over a wide area? Or do you sometimes have an uneasy suspicion that the product of modern educational methods is less good than he or she might be a disentangling fact from opinion and the proven from the plausible? She wrote that about 80 years ago, okay? That could be today.

Could have been today, yeah. We are gonna actually teach students to think for themselves, but only because we're teaching them to think rightly. Because only once you learn to think rightly,

rationally, logically, can you actually think for yourself.

Otherwise, you think you're thinking for yourself, but you're being carried on a wave of propaganda. Or you're thinking about, yeah, one of my favorite quotes is the, I joke, the theologian Rod Serling, who is the author of *The Twilight Zone*. You may have, you've heard this quote.

He says, we're developing a new citizenry, one that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won't be able to think. Wow, that's exactly true. You're right.

That's what you're saying is that, you know. We are consumers. Well, there's a- You saw that.

You know, we would think of the 1840s as a golden age of education. Everybody was so good, but already the progressive ideas are coming in there. And the students are not equipped to think and reason and discern and dissertation, all those things that seem so old fashioned, but are necessary for a democracy to function.

Yeah, it's, I mean, even if they use the word think, they're not really thinking. They're kind of parroting things that were sort of spoon fed to them. That ability to really deconstruct an idea is just, again, to your point, it's even being built now as it's a racist idea.

You shouldn't think about these things. You should just sort of go with the flow of whatever is happening in your culture and your peers and things. So this is, again, I love that the name of the book is *Passing the Torch*.

It's not like passing the flickering light. It's a torch. And it's an image from the Olympics and stuff like that.

Of course, but it's fire. Yeah, this is real. This is human soul formation.

This is not just reading, writing arithmetic so you can get into a good college. I love that you're raising up the awareness of the significance that happens every day in classical Christian schools. I love this idea.

Well, let me ask, by way of kind of winding down, because I know there's a lot more we could jump into here, but just thinking about the many parents that are listening and just if they did not have a classical Christian education themselves, we went through a lot of names of folks who there are probably three steps back going, wait, who is he talking about? Who is this Russo guy? So what's a good, just a good starting place? Because it's very intimidating if you're a parent and you didn't have this education. Not only are you probably grieving that you got ripped off, I like to say that phrase because I remember years ago in base camp, we interviewed George Grant and he said, I got ripped off when I realized my education. So what's a good starting point? I mean, what encouragement would you have to parents who are hearing this? Don't be intimidated.

Plato is easier to understand than books written about Plato. That's good to know. Be willing to join and read along with your kids.

You know, start with the Odyssey. That's probably the best place. By the way, Christopher Nolan is coming out with a movie version of the Odyssey next year.

It's supposed to have all the gods and everything in it. We'll see if it's good. But anyway, don't be intimidated.

Again, think of it as joining a dialogue. Think of it as joining a dialogue of what it means to be human. Think of it as, I want to read the books that Jefferson and Franklin and Adams and all of our founding fathers, Hamilton.

These are the books they read. And on the basis of the dialogue of those books, they created this system that is still working. Everybody's trying to destroy it, and it's still working.

So think of yourself as part of a tradition. And I like what you said earlier, Davies. Don't think of these books as hard.

Think of them as deep and rich. Think about, many of you have read C.S. Lewis. C.S. Lewis is not easy, but he wants to be understood.

C.S. Lewis is not using jargon. He is speaking directly to you. And you have to use your brain because he makes us flip from idea to idea and turn things on their heads and all that.

But that's good. Get used to the excitement of doing that and move in and try reading Plato's Republic. Just take it slowly.

I think you'll find it's much more accessible than you think, but get a modern translation that's not really old fashioned, hard to understand. Get a recent one. Yeah, that's good.

And certainly, as you referenced, Lewis is the abolition man. I mean, that is such a treatise on just education. We need to have been with chest.

We need to actually have substance in our lives. So, very good. Well, I appreciate, as always, you're enlightening us as to this amazing new book.

Folks want to get a copy of it. I guess Amazon's always a good place to head off to. Yeah, go to Amazon and type in my name, Lewis Marcos, M-A-R-K-O-S, and you'll see I got 27 books on there now.

You can pre-order it. It comes out at the end of April, but you can pre-order it now. You can even pre-order from Aristotle to Christ, which comes out in September.

This is my IVP year, so it's pretty exciting. And I will be speaking at ACCS and SCL, so check them out. ACCS, I'll be speaking about Dante, but SCL, I'll be speaking directly from my John Dewey

chapter and my Mortimer Adler chapter.

I'll be speaking on that. Well, we'll definitely have you. We'll have to do it live from, I'll be at both those conferences.

We'll connect up with you. We'll do both in the Dallas area, so it's good for me. Yeah, that's right.

And it's too hot to be anywhere, but inside the conference there. My son will be with me, so you gotta get through him too. He's sitting in the thick of things.

He now teaches ninth grade. I love it. Philosophy, theology, ancient Greece, and Rome.

So he's right there in the thick of it, and it's exciting. The apple does not fall far from the Marcos tree, I believe. That's right.

Thank you so much, as always. Love your new book. Can't wait to continue conversations with you.

Thanks for taking your time to be with us today. Thanks for having me on again. Well, you did it.

You stayed till the very end of the podcast. Thanks so much for listening to this conversation and a special thanks to our sponsors who make this episode possible. Classical Academic Press, Wilson Hill Academy, Light Phone, and the Classic Learning Test.

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What's on your mind? Help us tell stories that may be reflective of what you've seen impacting in your personal life or as a teacher in your school of what classical Christian education is doing, again, around the world. We appreciate you as a faithful listener. Hey, we're going to be back again next week for another episode.

Please join us. We wouldn't want you to miss.