

## **BCL ep343 Growing Up Classically: Behind the Scenes with Dr Louis Markos and Son Alex**

Classical Christian education is a generational journey. Students raised to love what is true, good, and beautiful often carry those interests not only in how they make decisions for themselves, both personally and professionally, but more and more, we see graduates returning with their own children, even stepping into the classroom as teachers in the very schools that shape them. Our guest today, Dr. Luis Marcos, has been a pioneer in this movement, and he's joined by his adult son, Alex, as they look back on their shared experiences at home and school and look ahead as Alex continues in his father's footsteps as a teacher, writer, and researcher, committed to forming well the next generation to think deeply and to love what is true, good, and beautiful.

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 here on the journey with you. It is always encouraging to have a moment to connect with you. I've been out on the road this past week.

I was at Brian Dow's Liberty Classical Academy there in beautiful Newcastle, Colorado. It was great to be with Brian and Amanda and the whole team there having a chance to lead in some teacher training and speak to parents and be with the students as well. It's always good just to be reminded of what God's doing around the world in so many different places and so many different contexts where folks are hungry for raising a generation up to think with depth and substance and meaning, and it is generational.

The podcast has been going on now for eight years. Many of you have been on that journey with us for most of that time. I always call it a vegetable soup of content.

You don't exactly know from week to week, which I think is what makes it exciting, is that it's different. It's generally evergreen, meaning you can go back and look in the Basecamp Live website archives and find interviews that are likely to be just as helpful and relevant today as they were years ago. Many of the topics that we consider for Basecamp Live are around three different areas, just the importance of parenting today, whether you've got a kindergartner or a high schooler or all the way on into college.

The parenting world is one I have a huge heart for and one that is harder and harder to do as folks don't live near extended generations, and schools are often asked to help guide with

parenting. Also, we spend time here talking about classical Christian and Christian education and the distinctives of them, and we also spend time looking at what's happening in the broader culture. One of the projects, of course, with Zipcast has been for us to sit down as a team and try to think through, if we have 45 weeks, which is about the average length of a school year, let's create a curriculum where we can look at the issues that are most pressing for parents and for educators, so parenting lower school world, parenting upper school world, classical lower, classical upper, and I would love to just, as always, invite you who are listening to email back in info at Basecamp Live.

I always appreciate questions where you're listening from, but if there are particular topics that you would find interesting or helpful, any of those areas, I would love to hear from you, so just take a moment and let me know. I would certainly add that to our lineup of topics that we're considering. I'm also doing coaching with the Herzog Foundation on a wonderful training on parent partnerships, so I'm thinking a whole lot these days about how do we partner and resource one another really well together.

It's always been a part, again, of this podcast, but it's something that I would love to hear more than ever from you on what is on your mind, which would be fantastic. This particular episode is sponsored by our great friends at Wilson Hill Academy, as well as Life Architects Coaching. Dr. Louis Marcos is definitely not a stranger to Basecamp Live, nor to this movement.

I went back and looked. Louis has been on Basecamp Live, I believe, seven times, if not eight, since 2018. He's a professor of English, scholar-in-residence at Houston Baptist University.

He speaks widely on ancient Greek and Rome and Lewis and Tolkien. He's got 25 books that are on an array of topics that are super helpful to us as those on the classical Christian journey. But what many folks don't necessarily know is the full story behind his son Alex.

If you've been around the conferences and the movement for a while, you know that his son Alex has now followed in his father's footsteps. He's now on the Humanities faculty at Geneva School of Bernie in Texas, where he teaches ninth grade Greek and Roman history and literature. I thought it would be really interesting to do a behind-the-scenes of the Marcos family, learning a little bit more about the way that Louis brought Alex up in terms of just day-to-day routines and life inside their home, as well as just getting perspective from Alex on how that experience went for him.

Now to look at Alex embracing this not only form of education, but leaning in as a teacher and one who's carrying on into the next generation. So just a really a wonderful personal glimpse into the Marcos' lives and encouragement for all of us on the journey together. So all of that to say, without further ado, let's jump in to this episode and this interview.

Lou and Alex Marcos, welcome to Basecamp Live. Thank you, great to be here. It's great to have you.

This is a real treat. Lou, you have been on this podcast, I don't know, I think one of your earliest, I have to go back and look, I've been doing Basecamp Live for eight years. You may be in that first few months, the earliest on you were here.

So it's, I don't know how many episodes. I think so. I think we probably started with why should Christians read the pagan classics? Yeah, well, that question just comes, we're going to hit that again today.

We're coming back again. There's never enough conversation about that. It's a real touch point.

And over the years, I mean, gosh, where were you Alex, 10 years ago as Lou's son? I mean, you were... Yeah, I was in college just finishing up. I just finished my ninth year of teaching. Wow.

Okay. Were you in Greece 10 years ago? Yeah, 10 years ago, in a couple of months, I was in Greece studying abroad. Wow.

Yeah. Well, we're going to have a little fun in this episode. I kind of want to do more of the Marcos unplugged conversation because a lot of folks know you guys and how exciting to have second generation Marcos leadership here in the classical Christian school movement.

But I'm just curious, Lou, back folks up a little bit. For those that don't know you, I mean, how did all this classical Christian stuff come about for you? How did this come to your life? I grew up going to all the public schools, didn't know much about private schools. I am the grandson of four Greek immigrants.

So I had a natural love, ancient Greece, the classics, all of that sort of stuff. I went to Colgate for English and History, went to the University of Michigan for just English, the PhD in English. And I've always had a love of the classics and more generally, a love of the great books and a desire to wrestle with the great books.

And really what drew me into the classical Christian world about 20 years ago now, I published a book called *From Achilles to Christ, Why Christians Should Read the Pagan Classics*, looking at the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, and the Greek tragedies. And that, I think, really got the connection going, speaking first of the CL, then for ACCS, then Moria Press, all of the schools and things like that. And I just got more and more excited as I realized the potential for an education in the great books.

And luckily, where I teach Houston Christian, Houston Baptist, we believe when Dr. Robert Sloan became our president about 18 years ago, he brought with him a vision of bringing Athens and Jerusalem together and building on the classics. And I was already doing that, and that just accelerated things. And so I began speaking.

And the most important thing is that as I started traveling to classical Christian schools, I would bring my son Alex and his daughter Anastasia, who teaches at a classical charter school, so they could see the wonder of this movement. And maybe Alex can tell you a little bit about his

experience and how he was drawn into this world as well. Alex, tell me your story then.

You grew up, again, apples don't fall far from the tree here. So how did this work for you? Right. Thanks.

So I actually went through public school all the way through from K to 12. So my parents put me into schools that were magnet schools for fine arts. So where I went to elementary school focused a lot on music.

So I got to begin playing instruments in first grade, second grade, did cornet in third grade, trumpet in sixth grade. So a really big part of my education was in music and learning the trumpet. But I always loved to be in school, loved learning and reading, having conversations.

And I remember hearing about classical education when I was probably close to high school. And my dad was speaking for those conferences and meeting people talking about classical education. And I remember going to those presentations and listening in as someone from the outside and saying, that sounds really interesting.

They're talking about really big ideas and great books. And I've heard about them. And I've heard my dad talk about them a lot, but I hadn't read them in going to high school public education.

We read parts of the Odyssey. We might've read some Shakespeare, but I hadn't really been introduced to the classics myself. I was someone that was on the outside saying, that sounds really interesting.

And I was captivated by the ideas, but I didn't really get to experience and be in the tradition until I got to college. That's when I first started reading the great books. So as a young man, you're growing up and do you have siblings? Do you have other? Yeah.

So I have one sister. Okay. I mean, so for you guys growing up, I mean, was this more like dad's kind of a classical guy that's his thing and he teaches and we do our thing.

I mean, in other words, it wasn't really, it was kind of, I guess you hadn't really experienced it directly then until later is what you're saying. Yeah. Yeah.

For myself. I mean, we experienced it as a family. And I remember something that deeply embedded a love of literature is that when we would go on car trips, we would listen to the Chronicles of Narnia and the Lord of the Rings on radio theater productions of them.

And we would listen to them and enjoy them as a family. And my dad, always the educator would ask us questions about the books. So we had most of them memorized by the time we finished our, you know, week-long car trip.

Did he require a writing assignment as well as the educator after this? They were usually just questions back and forth. There wasn't a written test, but it always felt like there might be. It's a

problem.

Dad is an educator. You never know what's going to happen. But well, and I asked these questions.

Yeah. Because people are always being tested. It strikes me, although this is not an equivalent to classical education, both Alex and I have been shaped by worldview thinking.

Now that's the same thing as classical, but most classical schools understand Christianity as a consistent, coherent worldview. And I spoke several times for some ministries and Alex and his sister came and they voluntarily sat in on all of the lectures and absorbed, again, not just the literature, but how to look at it through a Christian lens. And Alex is one with that on a lot of the classes he teaches and what he's written and all.

I don't know if you feel that way, Alex. Yeah, no, definitely. And to kind of give an example of that, just to try to understand the world through a Christian lens.

I remember I was a junior in high school in a history class and the idea of souls and whether pets have souls and all of that came up. And I said, well, I don't think so. I mean, they don't have souls the way the humans do.

And I encountered students that said, no, I look into my dog's eyes and I know that he loves me and he has a soul and all these things. That doesn't make sense. Why would you look at it that way? And I kind of understood the importance of worldview and how to understand the world around you.

And I didn't really have a fully formulated answer to that big question. I enjoyed that the question came up, but I wasn't fully prepared at that point to answer it. I just knew that that was an important question to consider.

Well, yeah, and those are really the essential questions that all humans have to answer. And I think that's part of, again, the richness of a classical Christian education is that we have both the questions and the answers, hopefully, at the same time. So Alex, for you, it's really interesting to have experienced education from within a traditional or a public school environment.

As you look back on that, do you see some of the, I mean, what are some of the distinctives you see? Because I hear that question is often asked, like, okay, as a parent, what's really the difference in a classical education and a Christian education or a traditional, even public education? Alex, how would you answer that just if a parent came up to you? Lou, I'd love your thoughts on that too. Yeah, I think I started making sense of it when I was in college, as I was starting to get more of probably what would be considered a classical education, that public education was more concerned with information, and classical education is concerned with formation. Like in going to school, it felt like I was just there to take in information, to kind of think about it and talk about it with students and have the teacher tell us about what they

knew.

And I thought the ideas were interesting and insightful. Maybe we can talk about it for a little bit. But as I got into classical education, I understood that it was not merely the information that was interesting or not interesting, but that we were getting at timeless questions and trying to make sense of the world.

And it was late high school and then early college that I realized I really needed something to help me make sense of the world. How do I live a virtuous life? And those were the kinds of questions that didn't really come up in public education. We had a lot of facts to memorize or kind of fun activities to do that I think were really helpful in informing my ability to engage with arguments and ideas.

But we didn't go further into exploring these deeper questions of what it means to be human, why we're here, what is our purpose, and to have great books, great literature to come to as sources of wisdom. Yeah, that's kind of, some have called that kind of the clever devil, I guess. I still don't know, you guys can tell me who to attribute the clever devil to.

It's usually Lewis saying that. But the idea of we've stirred up all these really thoughtful, deep questions and we've had no way to really answer them, that's a tough spot to be in. I'm so glad between your family and Summit Ministries as well as just the classical thinking going on in your home really helped formulate that.

Lew, how would you answer that just if a parent comes up, and I'm sure they have to you, and go, hey, what's the difference in this classical thing and the general Christian school and the public school? Alex, I thought, yeah, what else would you add to that? Building on what Alex just said, it is a real engagement with the great books, not just mentioning them, not reading a little from Homer or Virgil here or there, but an actual engagement with the Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman legacy. And to me, I just wrote a book called *Passing the Torch*, we talked about it at an earlier podcast, Davies, *An Apology for Classical Christian Education*, that the job of education is the word used a lot now, *paideia*, which is a Greek word that means education, but it also means enculturation. So it is a drawing of the student into the tradition which is being passed down.

Of course, *transmissio* means to hand down in Latin, we're passing it down from one person to the other. And the other sort of aha moment I had, what really sets apart classical Christian education came to me from one of the tape letters, number 27, where a senior devil was teaching a junior devil how to tempt his patient. And what he tells him is, in the old days, most of the devils would see through our temptations with ease, right? Because back then, they actually read and engaged the great books, Aquinas, Augustine, Plato, Aristotle, if they really read them, they would see through our temptations, it's the same thing again and again.

But luckily, in the world we've created, most people don't read the books. And the few people that do read them, the ones that call themselves scholars, they are the last people in the world

that can do anything with the knowledge, because screw tape has instilled in education what he calls the historical point of view. And what that means is, when a academic reads a great work, he will ask all sorts of questions about it.

When was it written? Who wrote it? Who did he influence? Et cetera. But there's one question that is never, ever asked. Is what the great writer wrote true? They don't ask whether it's true or not.

It would be considerably naive to do so. But Davies, until we ask, is what Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, is what they wrote true? It's never going to change our beliefs or our behavior. So again, in classical education, Alex was touching on it, the great books and the virtue formation go hand in hand, because we believe through a wrestling with the great books, that is one of the ways to instill virtue.

Let Alex tell us a story about what would Marcus Aurelius do. Tell us about that class you taught. Oh, yeah.

So a couple of years ago, I got to teach a class on virtue, called The Good Life on the Road to Virtue and Spiritual Formation. And we engaged with Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius. And we'd engage the students in conversations, and we talked about, when we got to the Stoicism Unit, we talked about the Stoics' ideals of duty and unity and detachment.

And I heard this story from one of my colleagues that was a chaperone at the school dance. And he said that there was one guy at the dance that was standing off in the corner. And some of his friends who were in my class came up to him and said, what are you doing? What would Marcus Aurelius do? Your duty is to go dance with your date.

Be more like Marcus Aurelius. That's great. You typically don't hear that in other schools, for sure.

But I love the idea, because these heroes of the past inform how we are to live our lives today. You talked about formation, Alex, and Lou, you're talking about, I guess, enculturation and the paideia. So before we go to a break, I'm just curious, because I think sometimes this gets missed.

Every school has a paideia. Every school enculturates. It's just, what are you being enculturated towards? Unpack that a little bit, if you will.

You know, who is it? Father Richard John Newhouse did this thing called 11 Theses for a Christian University. And he said, there is no such thing as a university, plain and simple. What he meant by that is the secular universities are not, as they claim, quote, objective.

They also have a point of view, secular humanism, sometimes materialism, sometimes naturalism. So there is no completely objective form of education. We are going to, and by the way, it's actually my son who got me listening to John Stow Street Breakpoint every week.

And he gets at the worldview and what it means and what we think. And so that's a very good point, Davies. If we as Christians do not instill the Christian worldview in students, they will have a very secular, often anti-Christian worldview instilled in them.

But the secular school is not going to be honest about it. They're just going to pretend like this is the truth. And so part of worldview thinking is getting to understand what a worldview is and why we have reason to believe that our worldview is accurate.

It's a lens through which you see things. Yeah. I mean, I've often said every school teaches religion.

I mean, everyone. In fact, you know, you're talking about just the problem of reading the great books and not having the backstop of truth and non-truth. And you know, the deconstructionism is a, you know, really a religion in a sense.

Stanley Fish, you know, years ago when I was at Duke, that was a big, still a big thing today where you read a book and it's utterly irrelevant what the author ever intended. It's what you want it to mean, which is the new religion and the new way to engage great text. So it does matter.

And to your point, there is formation. There isn't enculturation going on. On that note, why don't we take a quick break? I want to come back to the point or to the, we touched briefly on it, which this question of why should Christians then be reading pagan books? I want to just go a little bit further with this topic because it's something that we hear consistently and it's a fair question.

So I'll be curious how the two of you address that question. I'll be right back after the break. I'm here with my friend, Joanna Hensley, head of lower school at Wilson Academy to tell you about their exciting new program.

Maybe you already know about Wilson Academy. We talk about Wilson all the time on Base Camp Live. They're known for their really effective and helpful online classical Christian education they offer.

They have lively courses for students in grades three through 12. But what you may not know is that Wilson Hill is now offering a rich early learning program they call Forma for students in K through second grade. I'm here with Joanna.

Joanna, tell us more. Oh, thanks Davies. Forma is such a wonderful way to begin a lifelong love of learning.

We talk often about the cautions of technology. So let's just go ahead and get this out of the way. Are you encouraging kindergartners to be on Zoom all the time? Is that what this is? Absolutely not, Davies.



Forma does not involve putting five-year-olds on Zoom. Forma is a program that gives to parents valuable guidance from an experienced mentor teacher who walks them through a carefully curated curriculum for teaching reading, math, nature study, and enrichment like picture study and music, all within a like-minded encouraging community. I love what you guys are doing, especially for children in those younger ages.

How can folks learn more about what you're doing with Forma? They can visit our website [wilsonhillacademy.com/slash/forma](http://wilsonhillacademy.com/slash/forma). F-O-R-M-A. Fantastic.

Thanks so much, Joanna. Well, Lou and Alex, one of the things that's so often is asked by thoughtful classical Christian parents is, why in the world, first of all, are we spending time reading pagan books? And why are we not reading things that maybe are more contemporary and more, you know, from crossway publishers or whatever may be expected? How do you guys address that? Because Alex, you're right there in the classroom dealing with this every day. Right.

Yeah. I title my history class, In the Footsteps of the Virtuous Pagans. I think there's a lot of wisdom to learn.

You don't even hold back. You just go for it. You just say it like it is.

Yeah. And I have a little class catechism, an idea that I got from Josh Gibbs in his book, Something They Will Not Forget. And I have a question of who are the virtuous pagans? And my answer to that is those who valued truth, goodness, and beauty and prepared the way for Christ and the church.

So I mentioned that kind of in my poly education, these questions kind of came up, but I didn't really engage with them. When I got to college, I had an interdisciplinary class that did history, literature, and philosophy. And that's where I first got to read Plato, the Symposium and the Apology, Augustine's Confessions, and Dante.

What I found there in the classics and Plato, Augustine, and Dante was a serious attempt to find meaning in one's life as a human being. They spent much time in search of and in contemplation of ultimate reality, the goodness, truth, and beauty. And their search led them to discover things that had a practical impact on their lives.

They thought about life deeply, and then they lived differently because of that pursuit. This wasn't an exercise in thinking difficult thoughts. They weren't after just thinking really hard things.

More so, it was a pilgrimage to a destination that would nourish their soul. So I believe if we journey with the virtuous pagans, that they will lead us to that crossroad in which we find the way of life as it turns toward the cross. The virtuous pagans are not the way, but they can help us find the way.

It's still up to us and it's up to our students as to what they do at that crossroads. Plato didn't save Augustine. He helped him get to the point where he was ready to read scripture and to receive it as the words of life and to surrender to Jesus.

So, continuing that thought you mentioned at the break, I'd love for you to share what you shared with me, just how your students actually wanted you to make that final connection between the topic and scripture, just making sure that there was a validation of the idea back into scripture. It was grounded. Right.

Yeah. About a year ago, maybe a couple of years ago, I had a class that was really, they had a heart for scripture. What grade is this, by the way? This is ninth grade.

So a freshman in high school. Yeah. And we'd be reading Plato and Aristotle in our history class.

And they were saying, well, this sounds kind of like scripture, but what does scripture say about this? And I had students voluntarily bring their Bibles to class and start reading from them. And then that led to me making it a formal thing of students would volunteer to sign up to lead a devotional before class time started. They would bring their Bible, they would read a passage and they would share a reflection that they were thinking about.

And sometimes it was something that they were learning about in their Wednesday night youth group, or students would have a group where they would meet and talk about scripture with their peers. And that was leading into the classroom conversation. I love it when those circles overlap, where they're reading something in the Bible at church, where they're talking about something with their friends, and then it comes into the classroom.

It's a discussion when we're talking about these pagan thinkers. And they say, you know what? It kind of reminds me of what I've been reading about in scripture. And they share that in class.

And it's a beautiful thing when they do. Yeah. In a moment, we're going to talk about just the integrated aspect of classical education.

So that's an interesting point you're making where they're coming into the classroom, having hopefully been in churches and homes where scripture is a centerpiece of conversation. And then maybe the reverse of that, where you're studying a pagan who is bringing forward an idea, a basic question, what does it mean to be human? And then it's driving them to scripture to look for answers. So I think that the key answer here is that it's not we read pagans and the pagans inform us of the answers.

It's more like the pagans give us the questions and then they may have an answer too, but we're going to hold everything, take all thoughts captive to Christ. So the end game is Christ and scripture. Any stories? You gave us a great Marcus Aurelius example of bringing out Marcus Aurelius as the inspiration for better dancing.

Are there other examples in the classroom that maybe either of you have on just where kind of

connecting the dots of here's a really important question about what it means to be human. And here's where that question got worked out and where it tied back into scripture. When you teach the Iliad, I mean, it's really about Achilles wrestling with his own mortality.

I think students understand that when they actually realize what's going on and how Achilles is trying to bring meaning and value to his life. And because he's mortal, he thinks the only way he can bring that value is by collecting all these war trophies. That will be the way of finding immortality.

But then in book one of the Iliad, Agamemnon steals away his trophy, his war prize, right? And then it's, well, maybe that's not, maybe it doesn't mean much, right? If it can be taken away from me, obviously it's not a bedrock of value. And so when you start putting it in that phrasing that way, what does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be mortal? And I, at least in what I teach, I keep coming back to what I would call Christian realism. The belief that we were made in the image of God and therefore have inherent worth and value, but we are fallen and depraved and therefore we need limits lest we destroy ourselves.

Once we have that anthropology, that understanding of the nature of man inside of us, we can apply it to the literature that we're reading to draw out the truth. For instance, isn't this a great Bible verse? Bad company corrupts good character. That's a good piece of Pauline wisdom.

Except that when Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter, he's quoting Menander, a Greek pagan comic poet, right? And so we need to understand that. And it's just the way Alex said it right there. And by the way, at the last SCL, Alex got to meet Josh Gibbs.

They sat down and talked for about 30 minutes. Because we're all part of the same endeavor, the same idea of how do we pass down these virtues? How do we instill them in young people? And again, story is the way to do it. And it has been the way to do it for thousands of years.

Through story, Lewis talks about it in the experiment in criticism, right? I become hundreds of different people. I see through their eyes. I do all of these things.

And it's a way to engage the student without them even realizing it sometimes. That's really good. And I love that you brought up the Iliad because that was the thing of a story where we got to the end of the Iliad.

And Iliad Book 24 is all about grief where Achilles and Priam meet and they bond over their shared grief of Priam's loss of Hector and Achilles' loss for Troilus and for his own father. And that passage took on a whole new meaning because one of my students had just lost her father to cancer. And I remember thinking, how am I going to address this topic? How am I going to bring it up? But to her credit, she came for the discussion knowing that we were going to be talking about grief.

And she engaged and she brought biblical wisdom to bear. And in the context of discussing how do we make sense of life? How do we process grief? And how does that make us human?

And she offered this beautiful picture of, you know, as Christians, we have hope. We know that those who die in the Lord, we'll see them again, that they're in heaven, not in pain anymore.

And just to have that conversation with a real – this conversation was incredibly real because we're not dealing with ideas anymore. This was a really difficult situation. And many of our students had attended the funeral.

And we were all in that place of grief and mourning. And reading the Iliad helped us to process that and gave us that platform to discuss what is a really difficult topic to talk about. And so, we had the Iliad there, but then we had scripture and we had the hope of the gospel, hope of Christ.

What a sobering but great example, again, of this being not some esoteric, you know, pagan story that has little to do – it has everything to do because there is nothing new under the sun. And all of our human foibles and failures and successes are pretty much repeated throughout history, but they're captured in story, which is your point. And so, I think this is what makes this education so rich.

Why don't we take another quick break and come back and kind of building on this conversation, the idea of the distinctive of classical education around the integration of subjects. So, typically, it's not Bible classes on Friday afternoon and the rest of the time we're kind of just, for the most part, doing education like anybody would do education generically. It's very integrated in that way.

So, I want to get your thoughts on that because that's a distinctive and we'll be right back after the break. Hey, Basecamp Live listeners, a recent Pew Research study revealed that only 30% of millennial and Gen Z parents live within a 100-mile radius of extended family. That means that many families are missing the wisdom and support of older generations.

And more than ever, we need strong, consistent school communities to walk next to us, providing rich connection and helpful weekly tips. That is exactly why I created Zipcast. Zipcast gives schools a proven platform to communicate more personally and effectively with their parent community.

Imagine as a parent receiving a short weekly audio message from your school leadership, not just announcements, but real insights into what's on their hearts and minds, paired with practical wisdom from national parenting and educational experts like Keith McCurdy and Justin Early, along with experts on classical Christian education. We even include short testimonials and parenting tips from fellow parents all around the country. You can listen anywhere and at any time.

And now with Zipcast 2.0, schools can customize their messages even more, offering a truly personal and engaging way to build connection and shared vision. If you're a school leader not yet using Zipcast, I want to encourage you to consider it for the 25-26 school year. And if you're

a parent at a school that is not yet using Zipcast, take a moment and encourage your leadership to explore it.

It's easy to use, affordable, and effective. And in today's fast-paced world, Zipcast is a proven tool used by over 60 schools this past school year to deliver encouragement, insights, and connections in just 10 minutes a week. We like to say it's about encouraging you on the go with what you need to know.

Check it all out at [zipcast.media](http://zipcast.media) to hold your spot as we have limited spaces available for the upcoming school year. Graduating can be intimidating. Life Architects brings peace to the process by guiding your student through proven pathways to discover who God made them to be and how they can reflect that identity in meaningful work.

We call it vocational discipleship and it's a practice we offer one-on-one in school-wide workshops and as a consulting service to transform campus culture. Learn more at [lifearchitectscoaching.com](http://lifearchitectscoaching.com) today. So Lou and Alex, we think about this, what are the distinctives of a classical Christian education? And we were talking just before the break about the integration of subjects.

I think most of us went to schools, I guess, followed a fairly traditional, probably even if we really backed it up, kind of a Prussian school system kind of factory model where the bell rings and like little Pavlovian dogs, we jump in the hallway and run down and we jump in the night. So we went from math to history to civics to English and like these things are completely separated discussions and thoughts. At least with classical, it seems like we're trying pretty hard to say life is not separated like that.

There's an integration and to the point where we're just making scriptures the backstop. Unpack that a bit, if you will, both of you, how do you see integration being distinctive and important? It is important. I mean, again, it goes back to what we said earlier, that Christianity is a consistent and coherent worldview that has something to say about everything, the nature of God, the nature of man, the nature of the universe, nature of purpose, value, that it's not just feeling and emotion.

It has something to say about the nature of the world and something that has become increasingly important to me as I teach and speak is the idea that virtue in a true classical Christian education is not just a matter of do's and don'ts. It's a matter of properly aligning students with the nature of reality because virtue is not like feeling. Virtue is like the mathematical tables.

What is it that John Stonestreet says is like gravity, right, Alex? These virtue things have consequences that are part of the nature of reality. Just so often, especially when I was growing up, the idea that the Christians are the idealists not living in the real world, but one thing I've learned from screw tape letters and classical Christian education is, no, this is realism. This is the real nature of the world.

I love teaching the Aeneid, written, of course, by Virgil, 40 years before, 20 years before Christ was born, and yet Virgil's Aeneid has, big word, an eschatological view of history. That means a view that history is meaningful. It's going somewhere that has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and drawing students into that is, to me, particularly meaningful to understand that we're not living in a world that's random, one thing after another.

There's no meaning, no coherence. No, we live in a world that's like an Aristotelian plot that moves forward with necessity and probability, that that's written into the weave of the universe. What I'm trying to get at is the integration of faith and learning is not just reading a few things from the Sermon on the Mount.

It is an entire worldview of the nature of reality and how it works and how it is organized. And if you do that right, you can draw students into that and then into the dialogue. Yeah, Alex, I love your thoughts on that, too.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I also get to teach the Aeneid, and we get to do the same thing.

I love when students, after we've read through the Iliad and the Odyssey and Sophocles, that they're realizing that, huh, Aeneas is kind of like Achilles or Odysseus, but he's different, and they're able to make those connections and comparisons. But one place where I saw that was a really fruitful discussion was that in history class, we were discussing the Punic Wars, and we were reading some from the historian Polybius. And Polybius has his interpretation of the Punic Wars and is trying to say, like, it's not all about the gods.

It's not that the gods made Hannibal great or Scipio had some insight from the gods. No, it's because they were good generals, and they had a good strategy. But then I paired that with G. K. Chesterton's interpretation of the Punic Wars and his Everlasting Man.

And he kind of pulls back the curtain and says, this war between Rome and Carthage was between the gods and the demons. And he pulls back the curtain to say, this is a spiritual warfare situation. And for many of the students, I remember some of them coming, it's like, I've never thought about history in this way.

We talked about the Ephesians 6 passage about there's a great battle going on in the heavenly places, and that's the battle that we're engaged in. It's not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities. But to bring that kind of vision in our interpretation of history was, I mean, it was new for me when I read that in Chesterton.

I was incredibly moved by that way of looking at history and to bring that to my students and for them to say, wow, that history really means something. This is not just people doing things and there's battles and they fight and someone wins, someone loses. No, there's a great cosmic battle going on and the will of God is unfolding and God is working in and through even these pagan peoples.

And I think they found a lot of meaning in these events because Chesterton applied that biblical

worldview. Well, and it's the way we live our lives. We don't naturally break up and parse our lives in all these segments.

We typically live out of who we are across all aspects of our life. And I think that that's a really good point, Alex, is that when you create an environment where the Christian thing is in chapel on Friday and in Bible class only, you kind of teach people that the rest of your life, your private life, your Monday through Saturday life is kind of a different thing than what happens on Sunday. And what I hear you saying is that even when you're discussing, again, pagan literature or any conversation, it's constantly coming back to this active conversation of our faith.

It's a whole idea of all of Christ for all of life. We're going to turn the Christ thing off for this period of our class. So maybe a little more complicated with the hard sciences, but actually not, because that's probably an even more obvious example.

Go study quantum physics. You'll see the finger of God everywhere in that. That's really important.

Well, in the final few moments, kind of back to this is a little bit of the Marcos's unplugged story. I know folks would love to hear kind of just in a call to action here at the end, what were some just best practices maybe, Alex, as you grew up that your dad did that kind of, again, helped shape your love and interest and thinking and conversation and reading of great literature? What are any other best practices that you experienced that maybe others benefit from hearing about? Yeah. So going to my dad's speeches was always fun to see him up on stage.

But some of the things that he would do at the end of his talks was that he would recite poetry and kind of the two poems that he came back to a lot was the St. Crispin's Day speech from Shakespeare's Henry V and Alfred Lord Tennyson's Ulysses. So he would dramatize them, he would dress up and he would rile everybody up with those poems. So I didn't memorize, I didn't have them memorized, but whenever I heard those words, it was kind of a puff out your chest kind of moment.

I was like, oh man, that's good stuff. So I was teaching third grade, filling out with their history and they were looking for another poem to memorize for their students. Then I said, well, how about Ulysses? You know, third grade is when they read the Greek and Roman history and things like that.

And it's like, this is about Odysseus. And so I introduced that tradition and now third grade for the last eight or nine years has memorized a portion of that poem. And I get to share my love for that poem and I fell in love with it because of what my dad did.

He would recite that. And so I love that poem. And then I dedicated two months to memorizing the whole poem and dramatizing it for my students.

They go home, then memorize it. And it was so beautiful and fulfilling for me to see these third graders stand up and dramatically recite, it is not too late to seek a newer world. It's a beautiful

thing.

I love it. I love it. It's amazing.

I came and visited Alex when he was doing this. And when I visited him, it was about three months or something after they had already memorized it. It was the end of the year.

And I said to the children, I heard you've memorized it. And I said, I think I started it up. There lies the port.

And then immediately all of them broke out. These smiles on their face. And I was, yeah, this is education.

And kind of the way Alex is saying it, they're not just doing it, wrote memorization. They were dramatizing. They were excited to see the smile on their face of what they've achieved something.

And they're one with Ulysses. And you know what people used to do, Alex, I don't know if we can, you're younger than I am, but he used to memorize a very long poem by Thomas Babington Macaulay called Horatio at the Bridge. You know, anyway, you shall not pass.

The original, you shall not pass. I don't know, Alex, it's pretty long. We should try to memorize it.

You know, a lot of times kids would memorize that whole thing. You know, Alex, did you not do a paper on how after the Civil War, the Yankees imposed the German model on the South? We're still using a classic model. Talk about that because this is important to know.

Yeah. I mean, in a history class, my seminar classes, we're researching the period of reconstruction, so after the Civil War. And I chose the topic of education because I was really interested in it.

And I discovered that in the South, what they really had was a classical education, you know, great books, Latin, Greek. And I researched what was the entry requirements for Harvard and all these Ivy League schools in Latin and Greek and all the classics were on there. And that during that period of reconstruction, I researched people like Horace Mann and those people that were looking at the Prussian models.

And so, they were tasked with how do you educate all of, you know, any huge number of people that have been disenfranchised for so long. And so, they had to cut out a lot of that content. And so, that affected the way that the schools were run, is that they no longer required that Latin, Greek, and then classic study.

And then I saw that reflected in the entry requirements for Harvard, that they were no longer focusing on those skills of Latin and Greek and the content of what you're reading. They just wanted to have a certain test scores or that you had passed certain tests. So, it was a strange



thing you know, the South and the issues in the Civil War, but there was, you know, what we had lost was that idea of an educated person as someone who has read the tradition and has spent time in it.

And it was a whole way of life. But I think what's exciting about being in classical education is that we're recovering that classical education, we're recovering the reading of the great books, where we're not putting ourselves under the yoke of saying, well, we've got, we just got to make sure everybody can read and can do math and just kind of move them along. We want them to be part of this way of life.

Well, and I think it's a good place to kind of wind down our conversation, because this is really the distinctive that makes classical so rich is the fully humanizing a person and working that journey they're on and that we're on towards understanding who we are and made the image of God against these answers that are in these great books. And I think knowing what's happened in education in America, as you're describing Alex, in the last hundred and some years is really important to understand why what we're doing is not just some new idea or that we're a bunch of kind of the Amish throwback people who just can't get up with the times. I mean, we're actually using the best, most proven methods to raise a generation up to be the human that God made us to be.

We're the true radicals. Alex used to teach Latin. He'd tell you that radix means root, as in the word radish.

A radical goes back to the actual roots. Because you need to understand that one of the most important thing that classical Christian education does today is not just to create good citizens, but to create ladies and gentlemen, how quaint that sounds today. But that's what we're supposed to be doing, creating ladies and gentlemen.

And they are doing that. I'll just tell you a simple thing, Davies. You can tell a classical kid because when you talk to them, they look you in the eye.

Most kids are looking at their feet all the time. They're not all perfect, but they're more likely to look you in the eye and speak with that sort of confidence, but also with respect. And it's quite an amazing thing to see.

Well, and anybody listening that owns a business and has been trying to hire employees today would say that's the kind of employee that I want in my company that can solve a problem and has confidence and can be able to problem solve. So yeah, this is very much a real world ready education. And it's really been great talking to the two of you and hearing your journey, Alex, coming in a second generation and just the impressions that you had on you and to hear what you're saying.

Any parting comments from either of you? Yeah. I mean, just what my dad was saying there about the ability to have a conversation. We, uh, the last couple of years, we've been focusing a

lot on heartness discussions in our, um, in our, uh, logic and rhetoric schools.

And, um, and it's something that we need some training for. It's, it's a conversation where the students are, are, are running it. It's, it's not just the teacher that's kind of saying, all right, you say this, and I'm going to ask you this question, but the students are bringing the questions.

They're the ones continuing the conversation. And, uh, I'll tell you, it was amazing this past year to see students that had, so they, they prepared questions beforehand and they would sit down and they would ask their question and then someone would answer it and said, okay, all right. All right.

What's your question? Uh, and then they would just kind of stumble through, we'd get through like 10 questions, but we wouldn't really answer many of them. Uh, but toward the end of the year, we had one question and we stuck with it for 45 minutes because they were engaged in the conversation. They were respecting each other.

They were calling people by name. They were saying, you were saying this, is that right? They were trying to make sure that they understood they're making connections to their other, to get into their scripture reading, to their other classes. I said, you know, we said this and this other class.

And I think that is what you're saying. And then just to see them develop those conversation skills. So it is something that ninth graders can do and they actually enjoy doing it.

It's, it's one of the times where you say, all right, discussion. So it was like, wait, what are you, are you sure we can't go another five minutes? And then I hear them as they're walking out the door, they're still talking about it. That's, that's what you, that wouldn't, what a gift that I think anybody listening would say, that's the kind of education we want our children to not just know things, but to fully embrace and to let it form them to be made, you know, made to be in the image of God and to live that out until it's fullest.

So, well, thank you. Go ahead. Oh, that was to say, I knew I was doing a good job as a father because when the kids were young, we watched Shrek and they didn't say much about it.

And then when Shrek 2 came out, I said, should we go see the movie? And they said, no. And I said, why not? And they both looked at me holding hands because they'd been talking about it. And they said, we don't like Shrek.

The princess is supposed to be beautiful at the end, not ugly. And I thought, wow, because really both Plato and Aristotle agreed that true education is to instill in students the proper, so that they learn to love what they should love and hate what they should hate. That is how you're building the character of a person so they can tell that.

And then so they become a discerning person. Wow. They are showing discernment at a young age because they are being surrounded with the right kind of music and literature and things

like that so that the soul is built up and it knows what is good, true, and beautiful and what isn't.

That's so well said. So well said. Well, for those who want to know more about the great, you've written prolifically, and there's the, you know, Passing the Torch is a great additional resource that I would point to.

It's a podcast we did most recently of the many that we've done. Just let people know how they can learn more about you and your resources. And Alex, you're welcome to share anything you'd like to as well.

Well, the easiest way is just to go to amazon.com and type in Lou Marcos, M-A-R-K-O-S, and you'll see all my books there. You can also go to YouTube, type in my name to find my YouTube channel. My wonderful son Alex really surprised me this Father's Day last month.

He took the covers of all my books, I'm at 30 books now, and he somehow put them together and made a canvas print. So I now have a hang-up canvas print with the covers of all my books. So I thought, what a great, great gift to think about that.

So it's better to arrange them in a proper order as well. Wow. Well, that's quite an accomplishment.

That is a lot of work. Well, Lou and Alex, thank you both so very much for your time. I look forward to having you back on again and continuing our conversation.

Well, you did it. You stayed till the very end of the podcast. Thanks so much for listening to this conversation.

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Hey, we're going to be back again next week for another episode. Please join us. We wouldn't want you to miss.