

BCL ep364 How the Ancients Shaped Virtuous People with Dr. Louis Markos

Increasingly in our world today, anything that is old or in the past is often undervalued or assumed to not have much to offer in our forward-leaning, technology-focused world. And yet, classical Christian schools believe there is wisdom and truth to be found in people like the ancient Greeks. As they understood something about human nature and how to raise up a fully-formed human being, they missed out on the Christian answers, but they got the questions generally right.

And their view of the ultimate end or telos of education still rings true today. Join us for this episode of Basecamp Live. Welcome to another episode of Basecamp Live.

Davies Owens, your host here. Happy New Year to you. If you're listening here as this episode is dropping, from time to time, I will dig back through the archives of almost eight years of Basecamp Live interviews, and I'll often pull forward a recording that I think still has so much value.

And I want to make sure everyone has had a chance to hear it. That's the case here in this conversation I had with Dr. Louis Marcos a few years ago around this idea of how do we live in a world that is so biased towards anything that is old and loves everything that is new, and yet we are the classical people who actually are very much raising up a generation that will be ready for a technology world and will be ready for jumping into a world of the common arts, whether they are joining a technology company or working as an electrician. The students who are moving into the workforce of tomorrow need this liberal arts classical education, which is so steeped in the study of the Greeks and the Romans and ages well before us.

So Louis helps us understand and value that education even more. If you're not familiar with Dr. Louis Marcos, he's the professor of English and Scholar in Residence at the Houston Baptist University. He speaks widely on ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as on Lewis and Tolkien, apologetics, and classical education.

He has more than 20 plus books, including *From Achilles to Christ*, *On the Shoulder of Hobbits*, *Apologetics for the 21st Century*, *Worldview Guide to the Iliad, Odyssey, and Aeneid*, as well as children's books and a number of new books out, including *The Myth Made Fact*, *From Plato to Christ*, *How Platonic Thought Shaped Christian Faith*. Dr. Louis Marcos is a gift to classical Christian education, and I know you will enjoy this conversation with him. Before we jump into it, a very special thanks to our sponsors for this episode, including Wilson Hill Academy, Life Architects Coaching, folks at the Wise Phone, the Herzog Foundation, as well as the Champion Group.

All of their great resources can be found on our partners page. Without further ado, here's my conversation with Dr. Louis Marcos. Well, Louis Marcos, welcome to Base Camp Live.

Thanks for having me back on. It is so good. We are here together live at the ACCS conference in Dallas, and it's great just to get to see you again.

It is great to be back in Dallas and see people with faces and not masks. People, I know. We're ready.

People are hungry for the fellowship. My son is in college. Ed Baylor made a funny comment.

He said, this freshman year, of course, everybody's wearing masks. And so it's your brain actually kind of creates what you think their mouth is supposed to look like. And so it was rather disorienting when people's, you know, mask came off and like, well, that mouth doesn't fit you.

You were supposed to have a different... That's right. So at any rate, all that to say, it's good to be here live with you. And this is actually, I went back and look, Louis, this is the fifth time you've been on Base Camp.

And we've been doing this for about five years. And I encourage folks to go back. I was looking back, we've talked about the great books and really, you know, why they matter.

We've talked about, you know, could, and to that end, another episode, should Christians even read pagan classics? We have that sometimes come up. We talked at one point about beating Hollywood, storytelling and capturing and shaping students' hearts, and then wisdom from the ancients for flourishing today. So obviously, this is your deep area is helping us journey into the classics.

And so we're here today to talk about this idea of just how did the ancients shape virtuous citizens? So let me just maybe kind of back up. Maybe some folks are listening and they're just thinking what I actually had a parent say to me a number of years ago, as they were pulling their kids out of our school. They just said, you know, and this was a real issue was that we are so fixated on these Romans and Greeks, and we're just really not in touch with a modern world.

And so beginning there, like why the Greeks, why should we go back 2000 years and point to this folks? I know they had some really amazing sandals and robes, but beyond that, go ahead, Louis, why are these folks? Well, let's begin with a sentence that will get us in more trouble. And that is the Greeks are important because that's the birthplace of humanism. Wait a minute, wait a minute.

I thought humanism is the enemy. No, no, no. Secular humanism is the enemy.

Humanism, you could be a humanist Christian. You could be a secular human. Humanism merely means that human things are important.

Human things are worth preserving. We are rational creatures. We have choice and I don't mean we have complete free will, but we're rational and volitional creatures and what we do matters.

Simplest way to put it, before the Greeks, there were lots of civilizations that were thinking. What the Greeks did is they started to think about thinking. They start asking the big questions.

It's not just about subsistence and getting enough to eat and drink and be clothed. It is who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? What is the nature of the good man, the good society, the good state? What is the nature of the good, of the true or the beautiful? What is justice? They're asking these questions. A simple way to put it is we've all heard of Pythagoras, right? The Pythagorean theorem.

A squared plus B squared equals C squared, right? Well, we now know that the Egyptians already understood that if you had three pieces of string, three inches, four inches, five inches, it would form a right triangle. So why do we say Pythagoras invented it? Because Pythagoras came up with the theorem. He realized that in any triangle, any right triangle, even one you can't see, the sum of the square, the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the square of the other two sides.

He saw that there was something behind reality, that there is a truth and an order engraved. The word cosmos is a beautiful word, a little different than universe. Universe is sort unity and diversity.

But cosmos is a Greek word and it has the same root as the word cosmetics. Now, what do cosmos and cosmetic possibly have to do with each other? C-O-S-M, cosm, is the Greek root that means ornament. The cosmos is the ornament of God.

There is unity, there's wholeness, there's beauty in the cosmos. That's why it's ironic that Carl Sagan called his show *Cosmos*, because he said billions and billions of stars, but Sagan is one of the people that basically took away the beauty of the heavens and just made it into stuff moving around in space. It's really funny, he had that look in his face, but he didn't really understand it.

But cosmos is, I mean, a good way to put it is that whether it's the laws of mathematics, or the laws of morals, or the laws of planetary motion, there's all a unity there. And we're part of that unity, and we want to see and name the unity. Because of course, Pythagoras did not invent the Pythagorean theorem, he discovered it.

It was already there, and the Greeks wanted to discover the deeper meaning of the cosmos, but also the deeper meaning of us as human beings, ultimately made in the image of God. So, if you're not a humanist, what would be the contrast? I mean, probably a barbarian. I mean, you'd be like an animalist.

I mean, you just were- pragmatist, or a complete utilitarian. Which feels like modern day. Yeah, it really does.

Yeah. But back then, if you had observed, I mean, what jump started the Greeks to kind of have this deeper level and appreciation of inquiring about their world? It's amazing. I mean, they all

grew up, again now, you know, Greece is kind of a long period.

So, the golden age of Greece, the real birthplace of humanism, is the 5th century BC Athens. In 490 BC, and again in 480 BC, they defeated the Persian Empire. You've heard those names.

Battle of Marathon, Salamis, Thermopylae and the 300 Spartans. Well, after that, it just opened up the floodgates, and they had a sense of themselves. But it goes back to Homer.

You know, Homer's several hundred years before. He's writing this great epic, the Iliad and the Odyssey. And what's interesting, when you contrast the Iliad and the Odyssey with a lot of the Asian ideas, okay, the Iliad and the Odyssey are tragic, especially the Iliad, is very, very tragic.

But it's not fatalistic. It's not, there's no meaning in the universe, it's just destiny crushing me. There's still a sense that even though Achilles sort of makes a mess of things, he still is a noble human being who's struggling with his own mortality, trying to understand it.

So, we start here with Homer, with the Achilles and with Odysseus, with heroic characters who are trying to step out and wrestle with their own mortality. It starts there. So, is it fair, and again, I'm maybe oversimplifying, but the Greeks were really the first ones to properly frame the questions? Yeah.

Is that really what it is? That's it. And that's why, as classical Christian educators, students, parents, the pagans don't always have the right answers. Right.

But they ask the right questions. Right. They're pushing.

So that, again, I've said this so many times, as a believer, we all believe that Jesus fulfilled completely the Old Testament law and prophets. I say he also fulfilled the highest yearnings of the pagans. He answered their questions.

They only got so far. Well, it is interesting if you step back in history, sort of right about the time, maybe within a few centuries, that the Greeks finally got the questions right, the answer arrives. Actually, you're right, yeah.

And if you really want to understand it all, read The Everlasting Man by G.K. Chesterton, a Christian view of the history of the world, huge influence on C.S. Lewis, one of those top 10 books he listed. And he shows, for instance, how in the great Punic Wars, that was the Romans fighting the Carthaginians, most famous being the Second Punic War, 218 to 202, and that's where Hannibal was defeated by Scipio, right? Yeah. What he shows is what you have in the Punic Wars is the good pagans and the bad pagans.

There is a distinction, okay? None of them can be saved on their own, but there still are good pagans that are better than the bad pagans. And we have to remember the Carthaginians were the Phoenicians. The Jews were supposed to deal with the Phoenicians and stop them, the baby killers, and they didn't do it.

So Chesterton suggests that God raised up the most virtuous of the pagans, the Romans who already got ideas from the Greeks, and they defeated them. And then he says, then they reached their highest point, 146 B.C., they destroyed Carthage, and then they stagnated. They couldn't go any farther.

And so they dwindled down, civil war, all of that sort of stuff. It all ends up with Caesar Augustus, and during his reign, the man who called himself the Prince of Peace and the Son of God. Just happens to arrive at that moment.

The very moment. How convenient. So that's a good way to put it.

The questions had gone as far as they could, and now along comes the answer. So to the point of kind of our focal point of the question is how do the ancients shape virtuous citizens? So if you could go back and do the man on the street questions, if you ask a parent today, person on the street, and you ask, what do you want for your child? Ultimately, of course, we can, I guess, pagans today would say, we want to be happy, to make money. If you went back and you ask a Greek, they're standing in their sandals, what do you want for your child? Would they talk about something virtuous? I mean, it was just so embedded in their culture.

I think it would at that point. It took a while to get there. The fancy Greek is *kalos*, *kagathos*.

Kalos is the Greek word for good, beautiful. *Kali*. And *agathos* is the word for noble.

So I want them to be a good and noble person. Plato later on writes this down in the *Republic*. We want them to be a balanced person.

Houston Baptist University, one of our mottos is strong in mind and strong in spirit. Strong in body, strong in mind, strong in spirit. So the same way gymnastics, which was very important for Plato, the same way that gymnastics sculpts the body to make it healthy, they believe that virtue sculpts the soul, right? Now here's the big difference between them and the progressive liberal of today.

Both of them want to shape humanity, right? But the Greeks wanted to shape humanity against eternal, transcendent, universal standards of goodness with a capital G, truth with a capital T, beauty with a capital B. The modern one, the modern progressive, it's individualistic. It's individualistic. We're just shaping them with whatever thing, whatever's fashionable.

Right. So the shaping itself can be good or bad. Yeah.

But the Greeks understood that we've got our values, our virtues. Yeah. And we can pass them down to our children through proper education.

So what did, and again, in that day, this was not an education for everyone. It was typically would have been more of the upper class. Right, the aristocrats.

The aristocrats. And so this was again perceived to be incredibly desirable and only for a few at

that point. But the notion was that your child would at least be oriented towards something greater than themselves.

And so where did they anchor the idea of goodness come from? I mean, where would they point to goodness? That's it. Yeah, you're right. They don't have the answer yet.

They don't have goodness as a person. They're the person. Is goodness the emperor and how he's behaving on any given day? It kind of changes.

I mean, in the beginning with Homer, it is the great hero, the Achilles or Odysseus, right? As you move down, okay, the golden age is the fifth century BC, but it starts around 600 BC when Solon, the great Athenian lawgiver sort of gives birth to democracy. And what he wants to do is make the law the standard. We want a law, something, but of course it's impersonal, right? It's an impersonal law, but we want to shape our citizens against the law and not make it personal.

And we moved down and then we have good citizens. And then now as we get to Plato, who's a product of this Greek paideia, we'll talk about that word in a second. We come down to Plato and he writes in the Republic, now we're shaping them.

He's starting to come up with the idea of the forms that in our world, there's all sorts of forms of justice with a little J, but in the world of being, as he called it, in the heavens was justice with a capital J. He's starting to move towards transcendent standards that we can shape ourself against. And then it awaits Christianity when we find out that that standard is also a person, a divine person, the logos, right? And that was the word they use, logos, which means logic, of course, but reason, speech, it kind of also suggests revelation. It's one of those really wonderful filled words.

And then of course, John says, in the beginning was the logos, the word. That's Jesus. He is, the word was made flesh.

So you mentioned the word paideia and I want to, we're going to take a break in a moment, but let's kind of go ahead and set this up. So this is something, again, that I think modern folks, when we think about education, too often look at it in this very narrow reading, writing arithmetic, and then we do church spiritual stuff on Sunday kind of thing. And what paideia, which I know there's not an easy English translation, Ephesians 6, 4, you know, raising your child in this idea of kind of this fear and admonition, but raising them holistically.

I mean, it's, it's every fiber of your being. I like to explain it. It's not just your head, it's your heart, it's everything.

Good. Yeah. When they say train up your child, that's the word paideia.

It's paideia, which is not an easy, again, not an easy translation, but it encapsulates, as Greek words often do, something so much more robust than we can figure out in English. So, so to the average secular Greek, this was, paideia was in fact the goal. Right.

And they would have understood it that way. So go ahead and explain. Yeah.

It is education. It's actually the modern word for just children, right? Think of *paideia*, a pediatrician. Interesting.

Pedagogy means leading children. Right. That's what that word means.

So *paideia* means education, but I would call it somewhere between education and enculturation. Right. It is your passing down, not just the three R's, but you're passing down the virtue, the belief, the deep legacy of the culture.

That's the only way you can pass it down or it's going to be forgotten. I'm having a flashback to my youth ministry days when we did sort of silly things to illustrate where you would take a glass of milk and you'd, you'd dump a chocolate syrup in there and you'd stir it up, which part of that is not got chocolate anymore. Everything in that is now, it's fully, there's every fiber of your being, every drop of the milk is now imprinted with a particular orientation or view of the world or identification, you know, how you identify.

We all know that, you know, very important verse in second Timothy, right? That all scripture is God breathed, right? And it's, it's, it's adequate, useful for, for teaching, exhorting, and training, reproofing. That's the word *paideia*. Yeah.

Okay. And, and, or remember Hebrews is at 13 when it says no, you know, no discipline is pleasant at the time. Right.

That's also *paideia* there. Okay. Right.

So it, it, it's a much more holistic thing that we're passing to where we're kind of like I speak often about, it's not enough to teach your child the virtues. You have to teach your child how they are to feel about virtue so that when they do something virtuous, their chest comes up, they feel proud. If they do something vicious, their, their shoulders sink and they feel terrible.

So *paideia* is a training of the full person. This, I mean, for this, we're listening who, you know, maybe this is still classical Christian education, still relatively new. I was, I've said before, I was probably three years as a head of school of a classical Christian school, and I did open houses and I would say these things, but somewhere along the way, and I think it was in a conversation early on with Chris Perrin, he said, it's human soul formation.

Oh, good. And I just, for whatever reason at that moment, it just kind of struck me that it's like going from 2D to 3D. Like this is so much more rich and multifaceted and all encompassing.

And it's not simply just to your, to your comment. It's not just teaching character or some veneer of proper behavior. It's the deepest level of who you are is being formed.

Think of the danger of watch out if you exercise a demon for someone, because if you then don't fill that hole with God's love, grace, presence, seven more demons will come and his state

will be the worst. And so, you know, that's why, for instance, just my example, it's really good to teach your children to write thank you notes. But if you've made that into a rote kind of meaningless rituals, it's almost worse.

They need to learn how to feel grateful and thankful. And again, it might be if you teach them it's best if they're grateful and write the note, but if they write the note and they're not grateful, this actually becomes like, they don't even feel like they need to be grateful because they wrote the note. You know, that's why I love the Asian culture, but they're a gift giving culture, which sounds good, but it's a balance gift.

I give the gift, you give the gift. It's tit for tat. Yeah.

And to me, that's almost worse. You're not teaching any kind of gratitude or hospitality or anything. It's just balancing the scales.

Yeah. It's the whole thing of putting your heart into it, so to speak. Right.

Yeah. We're going to take a break. Louis, let's come back in just a moment and continue the conversation.

I do want to continue to unpack this distinctive form of education that obviously we point to the Greeks and then we had Christ come in and fulfill that. And then we'll kind of walk through history and figure out where we are today and what the Greek vision is still critical to who we are as classical Christian educators. So we'll be right back with Dr. Louis Marcus.

I know as a school parent and administrator that like many of you, when I hear the word fundraising, it can make me feel a little bit uncomfortable. But there's good news. Our friends at the Champion Group have created something different, a fundraiser that is simple and effective.

The good news is there's no selling of cookie dough, wrapping paper, light bulbs, and it's one that actually brings in significant support for our schools. It's called Feed the Need. And at its core, it's a peer to peer fundraiser, but it's so much more than that.

The campaign builds toward a powerful service event where students pack and ship 10,000 meals for families in need, both here at home and around the world. These meals don't just meet a physical need. They open the door for the gospel to be shared.

And that's what makes Feed the Need so unique. It's not just a way to raise money. It is a discipleship experience.

And giving students a hands-on service project at your school provides them an opportunity to not only connect your community to a greater mission, but it does provide your school with real financial resources that you need to thrive. Feed the Need is a fundraiser with eternal impact, practical, purposeful, and Christ-centered to learn more about how your school can be a part of

Feed the Need, visit thechampiongroup.com or check out our partners page on the Basecamp Live website. Today's episode of Basecamp Live is brought to you by my friend, Chris Casper, who you heard on a recent episode.

His invention, the Wyze phone, is a much needed third way, providing a solution from the dangers of a smartphone on the one hand and the limited capacities of an old school flip phone on the other. His simple distraction-free phone design for families who want technology to serve their real lives and give us and our older children a way to do basic essentials like calling or texting or maps without the web browser and the social media and the endless apps that can pull them and us into the addictive time-wasting aspects of a smartphone. I personally have a Wyze phone and I can vouch that it is an excellent solution and an appropriate way to use technology that supports virtue and focus and healthy habits.

Check out the link in our show notes and on our Basecamp Live website partners page where Chris is offering Basecamp Live listeners a discount. Welcome back to Basecamp here with Dr. Louie Marcus. So Louie and I just thinking about if, you know, what was their curriculum? I mean, parents today and teachers, I mean, we make a big deal as we should about which books we're going to study and we only have so much time.

I mean, if you could, again, time machine back to the time of the Greeks, what was on their curriculum list? What were they reading? Let's start there and then why those particular books and how were they bringing about this virtue formation? That's a good question. We'll start even before the books, even before the Homer and the Hesiod and all that, we're starting, oddly enough, with gymnastics. We're sculpting the body, we said before.

As in like cartwheels. Having all of us. Because remember that, you know, the Greek ideal of a healthy body is not a weightlifter with giant ass, you know, it's the kind of balance you see in a swimmer, probably a swimmer or a gymnast, right? Where they have a more sculpted body.

They're trying to sculpt the body and allow it to understand discipline. So we begin there. We all want to look like Statue of David, I guess.

Yeah, or something like that. A little more perfect ideal balance, beefed up in that sense, right? And then music is important. And, you know, Davies, you know, I'm 58 and I get so upset when people, they talk about rap and they say, rap is bad.

Well, yes, but all they want to talk about is the four letter words are bad. You know, the music itself is bad. Music that is like purposely ugly or disharmony, you know, that drove the Greeks crazy.

You need balance, you need a harmony, you need something that's going to, again, sculpt your soul the way gymnastics. So they understood how important music is. So you're sort of starting there.

And then they understood how important mathematics is. Why is, and especially geometry, you

might know that apparently over Plato's, not Republic, his Academy, over Plato's Academy, it said only geometers are allowed to enter. If you don't know geometry, leave, please.

Why, why? And that's, that's tough. Cause we're usually, we're really trivia people, not quadruple. Come on Davies, right? And why geometry? Because look, geometry is studying things like triangles and squares.

When you're talking about triangles, you're not talking about that little pencil thing. You scribble. We're talking about the triangle, the idea of the triangle, the invisible triangle.

So real geometry is already training you that there is a reality beyond our own, that there is something, a triangle, triangle-ness of which our attempt at making a triangle is an imitation of that form. So already you're understanding that. Then you're moving into literature.

Of course, for them, everything was just like, you know, in the old days of America, the Bible was your textbook for everything. Homer was their textbook for everything. And they learned, they even learned things like shipbuilding, right? But what they're learning is to model themselves after the great heroes, to study them, to see what they did, to have the same virtues instilled in, in Homer's heroes as in ours.

And you know, I, every semester I teach a class on Homer, Virgil, and Dante, right? And a lot of my students are increasingly what's called a first gen student. That means the first person in their family to go to college. Often in Houston, it's Hispanic, largely first gen Hispanic students.

How do we get them in? How do we explain it to them? Well, when I read Homer, Homer takes place in a pre-law society, by which I mean there's no formal legal structure, there's no prison, there's no policemen, they're, you know, they're the wise old man sitting in the sacred circle, but you don't have a full system. Well, how do you stop these boys from just killing everybody, they're the soldiers. You do it by instilling virtues.

And I teach them some of my favorite Greek words, eidos and nemesis. Eidos means shame, nemesis means blame. Nemesis is in our- You hear that often, right? That means blame.

You bring nemesis down upon you. The point is you don't so much teach it as you instill it in them so that they will avoid doing anything that will bring shame and they will also avoid anything that will bring blame. Now, again, students have always, say, plagiarized, but what's scary about today is in the past, you catch them and they feel a sense of shame, right? There's a sort of sense of inner disgust that they're still a moral creature that's shaped and they can come out of it.

What's really scary is when they're upset, they got caught, but it's clear they feel no shame, right? They've lost their moral censors. Well, they've not been brought up in a proper paideia. Their soul has not been shaped.

Jeremiah, they no longer blush. That's a good way to put it, right? And in Dante's Inferno,

they're no longer able to blush, the sinners, right? They can tell their story, but they never confess because they feel no remorse. So the other word is xenia, X-E-N-I-A, that's the guest host relationship, that you do what is right, you do what is honorable, integrity.

I think the best way I can describe the difference between the paideia that made not only the Greek great, but the Romans great, the British Empire, our founding fathers, and what we've lost is think about the so-called self-help book. The old days, self-help books were about integrity and honesty and about how do you behave when no one else is looking? That's a paideia that's instilled in someone. It all changed with that book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Now, thank God, Jordan Peterson's trying to go back to real stuff. He's not even a believer, but he's more believer than a lot of believers, understanding the human soul. So after that, now you do what you need to do to get ahead, but it's not touching you at a deeper level.

You're no longer asking, what would Jesus do? With my students, I also want to ask you, what would Achilles do? What would Antigone do? What would Aeneas do? It's a way of engaging in that. Well, and I think this is really important because, and this is a whole other podcast we should do on just the state of heroes today and who are here. I mean, you can tell everything about a culture by who their heroes are.

So we're not talking about Greeks and this very kind of stuffy formulaic, here are the virtues, let's all sit around on a rock and discuss if you want to have fortitude today. I mean, I think it sounds more like they had, in many ways, they were wanting to emulate these both heroes and heroines in their strengths and in their weaknesses, which is what you're talking about. This is not just perfect people.

It's people that make stupid decisions and you realize, okay, that's the bad choice pattern. Let me go over and find something more noble to pursue. This was reclaimed by William Bennett, when he wrote the book of virtues.

You teach through story, through the incarnational aspect of the story, you become part of it. And you want to be here. I mean, we used to have Roy Rogers and all these cowboys that would teach the little boys live by a code.

This is exciting. And we've sort of lost that now. Paideia is a little bit more of an active virtue.

It's love rather than unselfishness or tolerance, which is a negative virtue that doesn't really shape your soul. Well, I think that idea of it being an active, I think again, parents who most of us have not been educated in any form. In fact, I was just at the SEL conference last week and I put a survey question out to the entire group of almost 800 people.

And I said, what percentage of you were classically Christian educated? Interestingly, it was 13%, which on the one hand, it's not much. On the other hand, for our little movement, that's a lot of people who've actually already come all the way through and graduated K-12 classical

Christian who are now saying, I want to then put my life back into teaching. So it's an exciting, actually, it's a small number, but it's a significant number that probably five years ago, it wouldn't have been 5%.

But my point is that I think we're starting to raise this generation up who sees and knows these stories, understands the value of this formative form. And my point in mentioning that right then is just, I think the idea that these are just old stuffy stories of just rules that were to follow as opposed to a better hero to pursue. There's a great story that C.S. Lewis tells in *Surprised by Joy*, which is his spiritual autobiography.

When he was in his atheist phase, he'd read Plato because he studied him, but he just studied him. And then one day he heard one of his friends who had become a believer talking to a student and they were talking about Plato. And he suddenly realized they were talking about Plato as if it mattered, as if the reading of Plato might actually change your belief or your behavior.

He was starting to learn what Aristotle understood. Virtue is a habit. Virtue is not an emotion.

It's not virtue signaling. It's not I feel good about myself. Virtue is you keep practicing virtuous actions until it becomes a habit and until you become a virtuous person.

They understood that that's at the depth of the idea. Again, we're shaping, we're cultivating the soil. You see, virtue is not just do's and don'ts.

Virtue is acting in coordination with the good, the true, and the beautiful, shaping yourself against that. You know, many people know that Aristotle said virtue is the mean between the extreme. So obviously courage is not cowardice, but courage is also not foolhardy cockiness where you rush in like a fool, right? Virtue is in the middle and we need to cultivate virtue, right? We also understand that desire in and of itself is not bad.

God put most of the desires in us. But do you have rightly ordered desires or do you have disordered desires that send you off in the wrong direction? Part of enculturation, part of *paideia* is to shape your reactions to things. That's why we're, the worst thing of all, the self-esteem movement, never allowing a child to feel ashamed, you're creating a monster.

They are no longer a moral center. They just blow with the wind because they have nothing inside of them to say that's wrong. You know, and go off a little on a change in there, but okay, what was his name? Paul Brand was the missionary doctor in India who discovered what leprosy was or what a certain point.

And it's, it's a disease that kills your central nervous system. So you no longer feel right now, think about it. If you no longer felt pain, you would literally fall apart your body because you wouldn't do it.

Like you get something in your eye. It hurts so much. You'll do everything.

Imagine if you had no pain sensor, it would stay, it would fester. You could sit on a nail. That's why he said, you know, these lepers are missing fingers.

I never saw a finger lying on the ground. They literally whittled themselves away. So pain is a signal that you're doing something destructive to your body.

Guilt is a signal. You're doing something destructive to your soul. And the worst thing coming out of Freud is the idea that guilt is the problem.

Guilt is not the problem. Guilt is the signal that there's a problem. And if you don't get to it, your soul is going to degrade just like your body does if you don't.

Right. So this, this is, again, this is a shaping of it. Now I want to say quickly for listeners that, okay, if I were to get cancer, it would mess up my pain sensor and it would be going off all the time.

And that's when I need drugs to help me. Right. But that's when the system breaks down.

If you have PTSD, you may have an unhealthy form of guilt that you then need to deal with drugs or talk or both. But guilt itself is a gift. Sure.

It is a signal that helps us to manage the nature of our soul, which again, we're going to get off on a whole tangent here, but I've always thought, you know, before the fall, if Adam and Eve are in the garden and there was no pain, then they're gardening and, you know, catch your finger off and maybe that's not so good. Like pain's a gift to protect. So that's a really important point.

C.S. Lewis says in the problem of pain, he said, you know, maybe this is not the best of all possible worlds, but it may be the only possible kind of world to allow it. Right. I mean, again, there had to be the possibility of pain because if every time I fell down, God turned the rocks into pillows, we can no longer play the game.

Right. Everything is meaningless. That's why I'm so tired of endless movies using time travel, which makes all of our choices meaningless.

Right. You know, you can use it a little bit judiciously, but when it's overused, you know, like, you know, I like the MCU, but now with the multiverse, everything becomes changeable and fixable. Right.

There's no, there's no consequences. Right. Which is what everybody wants is a, is a, you know, a get out of jail card that we can just wave around.

So, well, I want to take another quick break. I want to come back because this, you know, speaking of paideia and the notion is you've, is you've written about with Western Christian paideia versus sort of a more progressive paideia. And obviously there's a lot of folks, including David Goodwin's new book out, and it's really trying to, for, I think, finally make more

mainstream this conversation.

This paideia thing is really, can be a weapon. I mean, it's what the Greeks understood in the wrong hands. This thing can be just as powerful in forming our affections, our loves, our knowledge, our virtues.

And so we are, again, I think a lot of parents that came through the public government school systems and everything, just as we all did, many of us did. So let's take a break and come back. Cause I want to get your thoughts on this idea of Western Christian paideia.

During this short break, I have a special invitation to all school leaders, administrators, and teachers. I want you to imagine for a moment, stepping away from your everyday routine at school and diving deep into the rich foundations of Christian education, surrounded by world-class scholars, seasoned classroom teachers, and administrative experts with years of experience running schools with a lot of wisdom to share. That's exactly what the Herzog Foundation's Institute is offering.

I've had the joy of serving as a training coach for the last few years, leading their two and a half day training on spiritual formation and another one on parent engagement. They offer close to 50 unique training events, ranging from board governance, to marketing, to classroom best practices. They even offer a training on how to teach the great books.

And the best part of all, well, thanks to the generosity of the Herzog Foundation, these training events, including lodging, are completely free for Christian educators. Institutes are located around the country in beautiful locations, including at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC and the Reagan Library in Santa Barbara. Don't miss this incredible opportunity.

Check out the details at theherzogfoundation.com. If you're seeking an education that helps your child thrive academically and spiritually, Wilson Hill Academy has spent years developing a model that I want you to know about. In their free guide, you'll see how their thoughtfully sequenced curriculum prepares students for college and how a biblical worldview helps them understand the world around them with clarity, and how their discussion-based classes teach them to think critically, not just what to think. You'll also discover how their teachers equip students to live purposefully for Christ.

With accredited live online classes, your child can learn from master teachers anywhere with an internet connection, all within a community that has transformed families like yours. Download their free guide today at wilsonhillacademy.com slash guide or in the link in our show notes. So Louie, we began talking about the Greeks and all the really the inception for our civilization, really, of how do you create virtuous citizens, and we talked about Jesus really being the answer to that, and then we can't really jog our way all the way through the last 2,000 years, but a lot has happened in the 20th century in terms of the hijacking of paideia by folks that went, honestly, and this is like a plot, we need to make this into a really interesting movie.

You talk about someone who gets this kind of orb of control. If you control the paideia, because it so deeply fabricates and forms every bit of who you are as a being, whoever controls that thing, you can rule the world. Pete Right.

Louie And so this is, you know, the progressives and the liberals and those who are anti-God have said, we want control of the orb of truth. Pete Who said they, quite often Abraham Lincoln said, you know, whoever controls the schoolroom of today controls the government of tomorrow. Pete And they knew what they were doing.

Louie Yeah. Pete That doesn't mean it's a conspiracy, but they knew what they were doing. They realize if they're progressive, they're trying to bring about a secular humanist world, a utopian world, all that sort of stuff, throw out.

They knew that the only thing that could stop them is Christianity and specifically the Western Christian paideia. So the Western paideia of Greece and Rome gets passed down and filtered through Christianity to become the Western Christian paideia. Louie And it remained, can you make, again, these are massive brushstrokes.

I'm sure some, you know, folks who are far more versed in this are thinking you guys are like massively skipping over it, but I'm trying to be big brushstrokes. So from the Greeks going forward through the centuries, more or less, and then obviously Christ's message, it remains intact, if you will, up until the 19th century. Pete Really? Louie When does it start unraveling? Pete I mean, it starts unraveling with the Enlightenment, right? But then in our country, see, you know, I've not only read Battle for the American Mind, I've talked with David Goodman, read the original version, the longer version was part of the show, and I learned a lot of things.

I thought, as most of us did, that the progressive takeover of the American school system started in the 1960s and 70s when they took the Bible and prayer out of school. Louie Yeah. Pete And I realized, no, no, no, the progressive takeover, it didn't start in the 1960s, it started in the 1860s, right? They basically reached their culmination in the 60s and 70s when they had those Supreme Court cases and unconstitutionally took the Bible and prayer and the last remnants of the WCP, the Western Christian Paideia.

Now, here's the thing that I learned, and it just broke my heart, I'm a patriotic American, is that back in the 1860s, 1870s, they couldn't just throw out the Western Christian, they needed a substitute. Can we find a sort of secular religion that will fill the gap for a while until we can do whatever we want? And sadly enough, what they turned to was a kind of patriotism, a kind of worship of the flag, and the flag salute. A lot of people don't understand that the original flag salute did not include the words under God.

It was meant to be. Louie It was Eisenhower, right? Wanted to distinguish from the literally godless communists, and so he put under God, but the original was meant to be a secular pledge that took the place of the Western Christian Paideia. And there was even a salute that looked like the salute in Hitler's time, and they changed that quickly.

It's quite disconcerting, actually. Yeah, right. But it took them a while.

But here's what's so sad. Yes, today, things like patriotism and the flag and the salute are much more late to conservatives, but that's because once they had effectively used their patriotic idol to displace it, then they threw it and gave it to, oh, you guys command that. We're going to have pickets.

I don't want it anymore. They really want to move towards a Marxist that completely redoes everything in which man remakes man. But of course, the ones that are remaking it are the conditioners, as Lewis calls them, in the abolition of man.

And it was slow. And that's why we sometimes think that the 1950s were a golden age. They were still progressive schools.

They were still schools that were not about shaping people in accordance with goodness, truth, and beauty. They were utilitarian. They were pragmatic.

And that's why, seriously, Davies, we've got to be careful because progressivism has manifested itself in two ways. It sort of branches. One way has led to a CRT, critical race theory, LGBT, all the stuff we know is bad.

But it also gave way to this utilitarian, everything's got to be vocational. It's got to be practical. STEM program.

STEM, right. Get rid of liberal arts. Liberal arts would freeze the mind.

And too often, good conservatives think, oh, well, of course, because we have bought into a utilitarian thing that is not really Christian. It's enlightenment. So we have to open our eyes and see what's happening and realize that we're no longer forming character.

Now, what they did is they threw out the traditional virtues, but instead of leaving a blank hole, they filled it with inclusivism, egalitarianism, equity, all of this, all those negative things, virtue signaling, because they know that we are made for virtue. If they just completely threw, there'd be a vacuum and we'd come get them. So let's do it slowly, slowly until it reaches its natural fulfillment in the sort of craziness of CST.

So, I mean, could you make the case, really, what we're experiencing as classical Christian schools is part of a reawakening, that it's going back and anchoring back to the Greeks, because this is where we lost, you know, again, it was a slow drift away, but we're going back to kind of the original source material, kind of Josiah finding the lost book of the law, like there it was. Let's go back. We are the true radicals.

Radical comes from the word radix, which means root as in the word radish, right? And we are the ones who are radix. We're going back to, just like our founding fathers. The people that did the French Revolution, they were throwing out the past completely and remaking man,

remaking everything.

They even changed the days of the week, the years, everything, throw it out. Although it turned out to be a parody because, you know, in a Catholic country, they often have those marches where they have a giant paper mache, the Virgin Mary. They just took that and they secularized.

So they actually had giant things of the goddess of reason. But because again, we have to have something. Yeah.

We can't just make it up out of the blue. But like I said, if you look at 1776 as a verse of next to 1789, you'll see the difference. Our founding fathers, they weren't all believers in the literal sense, but they all grew up with the Western Christian paideia.

They knew that there was such a thing as reason and logic and reason debate. And that's what they were forming. Yeah.

Right. And it's amazing. They created a document that is still there, even though it's been attacked and every so it's still there somehow.

Right. Well, and that's, you see that throughout our culture. I mean, I think it was Oz Guinness talked about kind of a long or the cut flower where, you know, if you cut a flower, it will look pretty decent for a while.

In fact, for a long while. So I mean, most of the 20th century, the flower had probably been cut, but we continue to speak in these moral ways that were really biblical, but we detached it from the Bible. So, you know, be love your neighbor or anyhow, it's, it's, it is a, these are critical days, but again, what a wonderful thing to be a part of a movement that again, we're not like so many progressive educators, they're just grasping at the latest new thing to throw at the wall.

We're anchoring deep to something we know has worked for 2000 years. And it also, it also makes sense sort of psychologically. That's how you form a character.

That's right. Character formation. Are you a fan of the emperor's club? I mean, I know of it.

I'm not a big follower. Yeah. Anyway, it was good.

And the teacher's trying to shape it. And he's talking to the rich father who's made a shambles out of his son's life. He doesn't hold him accountable, anything.

And the teacher says to him, well, if you don't help me to understand how am I going to shape your son's character? That's my job, not your job. And I watched that movie with my son and I saw him clinch his fist and I'm like, he's going to be a classical educator. And he has six years down to Geneva, Bernie near San Antonio.

But it's a matter of, but you know, it's sometimes too late if we don't instill those things in them now. That's right. It may be too late.

They can't think, they're not thinking in moral categories anymore. And that's really the tragedy. It is.

It's just the tragedy of our culture is today. I mean, you, and this is why this is the long game. And it's, it's, it's unfortunately not, and you know, we're a microwave culture, but talking about a K-12 journey, it's 13 years to form this, a human soul and not that God can't redeem someone who's gone off.

But, but well, a lot more we could say we're running out of time, but it just, thank you for helping us to kind of be reminded again of why the Greeks are so important to us as we shape and cultivate character and virtue. They're foundational. Yeah.

And remember, God chose to incarnate himself in human history at the height of this Greco-Roman Western, well, Western, yeah, but I mean, there's a reason for that, right? It's, it's in a, in a world and, and just one, one last thing, because this is so important at the core of the Western Christian Paideia is the idea of reason and logic and reason debate. Today, those things are actually being demonized as white supremacy. Right.

And if we lose the ability to communicate along rational, we can only shatter each other. It's just, yeah, it's just barbarians with clubs. Yeah.

We can't. So, I mean, it's, it's, it's a matter of life and death right now. Well, you know, as you're saying that I'm thinking about just Paul at the Areopagus.

I mean, isn't that an interesting moment where here are all of the, here are these, you know, rightly ordered questions and now an opportunity to present the correct answer. And we don't even, there's not a forum like that anywhere where there's civil discourse and thoughtful. I mean, you're right.

That's the problem is you can have all the right answers, but if someone's yelling at you, you're not going to have a civil discussion. Ameri-Christianity by C.S. Lewis began its life as broadcast talks given over BBC radio during the battle of Britain, when the Nazis were bombing London. They, they asked him to do it.

What is this Christian civilization we're fighting to preserve? Isn't that amazing? Right. And he was able to do it. There were people understood him.

There was a common vocabulary. The flower had been cut maybe, but it was still a flower. It was a recognizable flower.

It was a pile of dust. There was a vocabulary of words that had meaning. Yes.

We don't just keep changing the meaning of the words one after another because Greek, Greek philosophy, which is Western philosophy is born out of Socrates, not only having Socratic debate, but asking a simple question. What does justice mean? Right. That's just this job.

What is virtue? Right. That's just this. What is virtue with a capital V? Yeah.

He started asking questions and he began by getting away with the bad ones. Yeah. And then it really took Plato to build up and get the right answer.

Socrates had a lot of digging out work to do before he could actually rebuild the building. Right. Well, the encouragement, and we can end on this is just obviously it's easy to get discouraged in our culture today or to look at young people and their lack of ability to engage.

And we look at students who come to classical Christian schools. Again, we're still falling. We're not perfect, but at least there is a deeply held understanding of who one is and what the questions are and what the answers are.

I mean, this is profound and important work. So thank you for all you're doing. It's good.

And CCE is doing it. Classical Christian education is at the root. Well, thanks for being such a great encourager.

And again, I can't commit you at 22 books now. Is that right? Yeah. Actually.

Yeah. I think 23 now. 23.

Oh, my goodness. Wow. Well, we will have you back on because you've got the new book coming out on CSList for Beginners.

Yep. Okay. That's coming out.

That sounds great. Okay. So we're keeping busy.

You are definitely a busy man. Thank you for taking time to be on Base Camp Live. It takes time to be on.

All right. Thank you for listening to this episode of Base Camp Live. Be sure to check out our website, BaseCampLive.com for more than eight years of timeless episodes that you'll find helpful and encouraging as well as the helpful resources offered on our partners page.

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