

BCL ep374 SERIES: What is Classical Christian Education? with Dr. Michael Adkins

What is classical Christian education? It sounds like a simple question, but the answer is often more complex than people expect. In this ongoing Basecamp Live series, we're sitting down with key leaders in the movement to help them frame up the best answers and why it matters so much today. In this episode, Dr. Michael Adkins joins us to offer a fresh perspective on how this time-tested approach to education helps cultivate order and wisdom and clarity in a very fragmented world, shaping the next generation in both our schools and our homes.

All this and more on 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. Davies Owens, your host here on the journey of raising the next generation. You know, I was looking recently at the calendar thinking, oh my goodness, it's actually going to be 10-year anniversary of the Basecamp Live podcast later this fall.

We'll have to do some special programming. It's hard to believe we've been on this journey for 10 years and we couldn't do it without you guys listening and being a part of this each week. You know, podcasting, when I started it, I still find it somewhat humorous because 10 years ago, podcasting was still very new and I remember people curious about, well, what is this thing? Even one particular question I received, which was, this must be a gardening term because you're casting pods out there or something.

So that was early on. You know, when people ask you that, it was early on. But I'm so thankful for each of you taking time to listen each week.

I don't take it for granted. It is a very one-way conversation though because I seem to do more of the talking over here, but I love to hear from all of you. So info at Basecamp Live, drop me an email.

Let me know what is on your mind. Big shout out in this episode to a couple of folks that are in the Basecamp Live and Zipcast community, Victoria Harris, head of school at Providence School of Tifton in Tifton, Georgia, as well as Alyssa Malden, head of school at the Providence Academy in Rockwall, Texas. Thank you for being a part of our listening community each week and for being on the journey of raising up the next generation at your classical Christian schools.

I also want to just mention one of the things that we do, of course, is part of the extended work of Basecamp Live and really my full-time job is running Zipcast. We now have over 100 schools, about 10,000 listeners on a typical week. It's a very highly valued resource from school leaders

and parents through this really fairly simple process, fairly simple process of having a weekly short form audio message from your school leaders to parents, along with access to our growing content library on topics ranging from parenting to Christian education.

I want to encourage you, if you're not in a Zipcast school, to consider signing up this spring and getting familiar with this simple process. It's also very affordable. And on top of all that, we're launching this summer a Zipcast for teachers so that schools have a way to connect internally each week with even more efficiency to their teaching staff and team.

Email me directly with any questions or check out our new website at zipcast.media. We so thank you for your partnership as we're all part of this growing work of raising up the next generation and connecting together each week at Basecamp Live, where we kind of have that image of sitting around the fire warming up and encouraging one another and with Zipcast giving you the microphone to speak into your own community and bring encouragement. In this conversation this week, I sit down with Dr. Michael Adkins. He's a director of academics and faculty member at St. Agnes School in St. Paul, Minnesota.

He has taught English and history and theology and Latin in elementary, middle, and high school for over two decades, and he currently works on curriculum and professional development and institutional advancement. He is an educational consultant, a public speaker, and a retreat leader. He has also worked extensively in curriculum development, school improvement, pedagogy, and classical liberal arts education.

In other words, he is more than qualified to answer the question, what is classical Christian education? He and I both serve as well on the board of academic advisors for the classical learning test. He is married to Cynthia, with whom he leads the online book club community for Word on the Fire Institute, and together they have nine children. Before we jump into the conversation, a special thank you to several folks who have sponsored this episode, our friends at The Wise Phone, a great alternative to a smartphone, Dr. Robert Littlejohn and Chuck Evans and their wonderful book and resource *Wisdom and Eloquence*, as well as the team at Wilson Hill Academy and the Herzog Foundation and Life Architects Coaching.

All of these partners, you can learn more on our partner page. Great resources. But without further ado, here's my conversation with Dr. Michael Adkins.

Michael, welcome to Base Camp Live. Thank you so much for having me, Dave. I really appreciate it.

It's an honor to be here. Well, I appreciate you being here. We've had the chance to get to know each other a little bit, but I'd love for the listeners to hear a little bit of your journey into education, classical education.

Share with folks kind of how this came about for you. Yeah, I'll try to be brief here, but I was a public school kid and I was really excited about what we called in public school social studies,

because in my high school, a really special teacher created a double period class. It was a mix of social studies and English.

And he created this interdisciplinary course in which we intermingled the study of history and literature and art and all kinds of things. And that really got me really excited about the possibility of teaching. I mentioned to you this before when we first met, but another huge influence on me as a kid was honestly Indiana Jones and watching the Indiana Jones movies.

You know, Dr. Jones, he was pretty cool. And I remember one of his students in the class scenes is winking at him, this attractive young girl. And then he's going off and hunting treasure and archeology and all that.

And so I was really attracted to study because I wanted to be like my teacher in school. And I also wanted the opportunity to go on, on archeological digs and do things around the world. So that was the beginning of it.

And then I had a major conversion or reversion, I should say to my Catholic faith after my mom passed away. And I was on the way with the classics and really interested in getting a PhD in classical studies. I was looking at the University of Minnesota.

And after my mom died, I kind of realigned my priorities in life and really got into classical Christian education, basically. And so I ended up teaching at an ecumenical classical Christian school for seven years. And in the process of my reversion, I then entered a master's program in Catholic studies at the University of St. Thomas.

And I was teaching Latin, I was teaching English. And so when I had my reversion to the faith, all of a sudden I realized two things that I really loved could come together. And that's a love of history, a love of art, and then combined with my sort of re-found faith after my mom's passing.

And so for me, the Catholic world and Catholic studies was this foray into integrating the wonderful, fascinating things of the ancient world. And I was a classics major in college and intermingling those two and bringing them together. So I was really excited about forming young disciples and then drawing them into this life of the mind and getting them to be engaged young people and really getting an education, a really solid education in the classics that I never got in public school while also coupling that with formation in their faith.

I love the fact that Indiana Jones played such a significant role. It's easy to kind of laugh at that, but you can see where so often we probably don't market ourselves as well as we could as classical folks that come join us and you can spend your adult years living in a library or something, as opposed to this life of adventure and discovery that's such a part of it. We're doing this series on just trying to explain what is classical Christian.

So I wanted to ask you, if somebody came up to you on the sidewalk and said, Hey, you're Mr. Classical guy, what is classical Christian education? Do you have just sort of a go-to answer to that? Yeah. My quick pithy elevator is, we talk about in your progressive standard model of

education, we talk about college and career readiness, right? But classical education is not about, that's about doing, right? Credentials and doing. College and career readiness is very much, I accomplish certain tasks, I do certain things, skills.

Whereas I really believe that classical education, especially classical Christian or Catholic education is about being. And so my quick difference is, it's about being rather than doing. It's about the type of person that you're cultivating and forming and educating rather than simply credentialing them to progress through the world of work.

And we're going to obviously get into that in a moment here in our topic, but typical American education, Americans are very much pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Very much. We think of the self-made man, we accomplish these tasks and we earn these credentials and we move on to the next level.

And the point of it all, at least when I was in public school, whenever I asked, why are we doing this? It was always something like, so you can pass to get to the next grade or you can get to the next level so that you can then go to college so that you can then get a job so that you can make money and then you can buy stuff. And really, classical education is more about cultivating a type of person. And so it's about being not about doing.

And what ends up happening is when you cultivate a person who loves things worth loving, loves things that are true, good and beautiful. And they read the rich texts from our culture. They have cultural literacy.

They know things. They're engaged. They end up being the most useful person for society.

And the most useless person is just somebody who's a self-made man who's really interested in credentials and doesn't value anything beyond what's useful. And so we don't want a society full of utilitarians. We want a society full of people who care about what is actually true, good and beautiful.

And they themselves challenge themselves each day to be the best version of themselves. That's what we want. Well, and again, I'm glad you put the point in there that it's, it is true, good and beautiful, but those underlying principles of education then ultimately form, if you're going to put, you know, if you want to go head to head in the utilitarian battle, we're still going to win in that game as well.

And that's, I mean, I'm kind of the punchline of the whole story here. And I think that's, you know, a lot of parents listening buy into this classical thing probably for grammar school and, you know, it's good character development. It's biblically and sound and all of that.

But then it becomes this, the pragmatism utilitarian pole starts coming along. And the fear is I'm handicapping my child in some way because they're not going to be able to get into the STEM thing that we want them in or whatever that may be. Absolutely not.

It's so funny. We, we had our freshmen registration night for all our new freshmen coming in, students coming from our eighth grade and new students coming in. And I tell them a little bit about what we do as a, as a classical liberal arts school.

And one of the, I always find funny is, is, is so many schools that again, they're high schools, they're, they're, they're talking about what they do with, with teenagers. And we have this common expression of critical thinking. And I always get the audience in stitches when I go, the people who came up with us, have they ever met a teenager before? Teenagers are just about the most critical human beings on earth.

Like everything's dumb, everything's stupid, nothing is good enough, everything's boring. And I said, we don't want more critical thinking. What we want is logical thinking, right? Thinking that is grounded in the traditions, thinking that gives them a foundation to build off from.

But if, if, but really critical thinking is, is not just, well, that's just a fancy expression for, for being able to analyze things well. Well, kind of the critical thinking also has an implication of skepticism and picking things apart. I mean, critical theory is most, most high school English students learn to read literature through some sort of lens, which is critical theory.

So at any rate, we need logical thinkers in our, among our teens, not more critical thinking cultivated. It is such, yeah. And often when I talk with student groups, I'll actually kind of, it's a little silly maybe, but we've already talked about Indiana Jones, but I'll just talk about how, you know, so I think a fascination in our culture with a lot of superheroes and Marvel or whatever else, it's because we want to think there is some, would that be amazing if you had this ability that no one else had? And I, and I like to say, well, in fact, that is what you are getting.

You are getting a superpower where you will be able to walk into the marketplace and be able to discern wisely and to think critically and to not just be at the mercy of sort of group think like the rest of the world around you. So. Absolutely.

Absolutely. It's a, definitely a different way to see the world. Well, I want to, you know, again, just trying to, for a lot of folks listening, they arrived at the classical Christian school because the uniforms were cute and it was a little bit better character development than the school down the street.

And we don't often realize the, the, the flow of history that we're walking into or that we're a part of, especially as it relates to the formation of civil society. And I think this is again, like to take it up a few notches, not just what's in it for my kid and getting him to a better college, but literally the hope of our, of our nations, I believe rests largely in this important project of forming the next generation. I mean, I, I'll often begin talks when I speak at schools by making the audacious claim, which I'd love your thoughts on.

I'm saying basically classical education, classical Christian education is the last best hope for our civilization. Is that an, is that an unreasonable statement? Is that a, how do you react when you

hear that? Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. And I'm not just saying that cause you're the host of the show.

You can disagree with me too, but yeah, Dave's a little exaggerated. There's a saying, I don't know if this is Marshall McLuhan, but the nature of a thing is what it does. And you look at public education, it's extremely successful.

It's extremely successful. We've, we've got you know, a couple of generations of kids who don't really believe that our country is anything special. They don't believe in free speech.

They don't understand what the second amendment is all about. They want to get rid of the electoral college. You know, they want to stack the Supreme court there.

There's, there is, you know, the nature of a thing is what it does. And our public schools have succeeded. And, you know, we can say that in a, in a sort of critical sense from looking at what's happening on the ground is obviously problematic.

Schools that are, that are, you know, basically forming students and ideologies about the human person and human sexuality, and then not telling their parents about it. I mean, all that's just crazy, but the reality is, and I've studied this, is that the, the architects of American modern progressive education back in the 1920s and thirties, folks like John Dewey, this is absolutely, I'm absolutely convinced that this is what they wanted. Now they understood, they were smart enough to understand that this had to be a boil the frog sort of situation.

But if you look at Dewey's philosophy, where we are at is absolutely the product of what his belief system entail. You know, this is the logical conclusion. It's not as though, gosh, if we would have just passed some laws in 1983 or 84, after the after Reagan's you know, secretary of education, who is it at the time, Bill Bennett, when he, when he, you know, a nation at risk, if we would have just passed some laws, then it would have really fixed this.

It would have just slowed down the rot, I think. And I hate to say that, because there's a lot of great folks out there doing work in public schools, and they're, they're trying their best. But I really do believe that the progressive philosophy by the pragmatists and John Dewey, this is what they intended.

And it's a very, it's a very important point of understanding that I think a lot of us that grew up, I was like you grew up in public school and then private school later, but no idea of the larger story that we were kind of in this flow of history with. And so if you had to, let me just ask this. I mean, if you had to go back and say, another, another statement I like to make is that classical Christian education was the way basically everyone was educated in the West until 100 or so years ago, or 150 when, you know, John Dewey and others started to come along, the progressives.

Is that a reasonable statement to make that, that this is not the new, some new thing that we've come up with? This is literally the way people were educated. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Now the sort of scales at which, you know, your average child was educated is very different. Now we have compulsory education. Every single child must K through 12 attend school.

But really that, that's absolutely true. And when you look at, we could do a whole podcast on American education. Yeah.

And people would be absolutely astonished at how biblically based the first two centuries or more, actually, gosh, probably three plus centuries of American education were biblically based, almost exclusively biblically based, and then based in the classics and learning Latin. Which is, which is, which is astonishing. It's astonishing.

And it's, you know, it's a story you don't ever hear. And that's why, and then, you know, you catch wind of some classical Christian school down the street and you're like, well, is this some, you know, some new trendy thing? Or it's a bunch of people who would rather be Amish, but there were no Amish around. So they started this classical, like, hold on a minute.

You guys, you're literally walking into a story that's so big and so important. So let's take a break. I want to come back and explore this a little bit more and then walk us from those, you know, that transition point of what happened in early American history, and then up to current day, understanding what is classical Christian, because knowing its history is a very key part of knowing what is it, you know, how to answer that.

So we'll be right back after the break. 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.

Hi there, classical Christian parents, students, and teachers. This is Robert Littlejohn, co-author with Charles Evans of *Wisdom and Eloquence, A Christian Paradigm for Classical Learning*, published by Crossway Books. We want you to know about our new book with well-known family counselor Keith McCurdy, published by Classical Academic Press.

The book is titled *Wisdom and Eloquence for Parents, How Classical Christian Education Can Transform Your Children, Your Family, and the World*. We have written this shorter parent-focused book specifically as an admissions and parent education resource for schools and

families. We are excited to be proud sponsors of Zipcast and Basecamp Live, and we hope you are enjoying these two great resources for classical learning as much as we are.

And we would invite you to visit our website, wisdomandeloquence.org, to explore the various services offered by the authors of Wisdom and Eloquence for Parents and to let us know how we can best serve you. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Michael, before the break, we were talking, we kind of introduced this idea of just this flow of history that most of us are not familiar with.

So you mentioned before John Dewey, the progressives. So the point is for centuries, education was effectively biblical. It was classical by many definitions, and then something happened.

So kind of pick up with where the train came off the track and kind of help us again understand where we are now. Yeah, it's probably different in every country, but in the United States in particular, what started happening originally was higher ed is where it began to erode first. And there's a great book, James Tonson Burchell, his book called *The Dying of the Light*, and there's a short summary of this in *First Things*.

And he talks about how religious colleges and universities started to water down their identities in the mid to late 19th century, so the 1800s. And so you saw constitutions that in the industrial revolution, a lot of these things were, a lot of things in society were challenging these colleges and universities to prepare people for the world of work. And they ended up taking their very classical curriculum and sort of industrializing it.

And in doing so at the same time, they watered down their mission commitments and their commission and their commitments to their founding churches. And, you know, for example, an obvious one, you can look at Harvard and the seal of Harvard. And, you know, it's something like, looks at Veritas, light and truth or something and religious symbolism, and all of that is completely washed away now.

And so it began with the erosion of higher ed in the United States. And then that slowly trickled down to our public school system, but it took a lot of time. It really started exploding in our grade schools and secondary schools, our primary and secondary schools at the advent of progressive education with John Dewey and those folks in the early 20th century, when they actually started developing.

Now that these colleges and universities had eroded their religious commitments and began offering more sort of quote unquote, practical majors, they developed education schools and education schools that were very purposely to undermine what we now call the classical model, a sort of scholastic approach to learning, you know, learning Latin and Greek was out, reading the great books, studying philosophy that was replaced by the study of psychology and the science, the hard sciences. And so, and a very purposeful effort by John Dewey to remove God from the equation. And so, you know, by the mid 20th century, American education was almost night and day difference from 50, 60 years prior.

And there's a lot of laws in our country too. You'd be surprised the Supreme Court actually plays an important and not so great role. I took a school law course and I learned how the Supreme Court, even though they decide a case a certain way, the various opinions supporting it, the majority opinion, what they write in there will actually stack the deck for precedents for changes to be made in the field of education.

And I know that sounds really weird and strange, but it's true. And so, you know, one particular example is the Pinker case where a couple of kids were protesting the Vietnam war and their administrators came in and targeted them and wrote up an ad hoc policy to target them. They were actually Christian kids protesting the Vietnam war.

The administration of the school wrote up an ad hoc policy to directly target them saying, if you wear a black armband, imagine this is a protest in a public school now, all they were doing is wearing black armbands. Mm hmm. So what happened is the Supreme Court supported the Pinker kids and ruled against their administration, which was correct.

But in the opinion, the ruling opinion stated that children under the age of 18 in public schools have free speech rights. And that that is, you know, that previously was in loco parentis and educators are, they have charge in loco parentis and the charge of parents, like they have a sort of total authority over these kids. But the court said, no, no, they have free speech rights.

Right now, they can come to school with T-shirts with all kind of garbage all over them. You know, crazy hair you can't enforce against their right of free expression and speech. So, you know, that's just an example of how you erode them.

Yeah, it's a great example of the erosion. But but one thing I hear you saying that I want to make sure is clear to folks is that in the sense they took out traditional Judeo-Christian theology and anchor points, they took out the authority of the family, but they didn't just leave it in a neutral frame. I mean, part of what makes education such a critical element in the ability to even have a free and ordered society is that you are forming something deep, the paideia is being formed in a child.

So in a sense, I would say every school teaches religion, you just change religions. Is that fair to say? Absolutely. Absolutely.

Yep. And so we've now got this progressive agenda, which is about the individual. It's about my rights to do whatever I want.

I mean, look, fast forward from the black armband decision to where we are today. Hence, again, sort of this very audacious claim that, you know, I think the last best hope for civilization is classical Christian education, because if we can reinstate that sense of I am humbling myself before the authority of God and I'm falling under the rule and jurisdiction of the church and my family, now all of a sudden, the society becomes rightly ordered. So I'm saying this because it seems like, again, we so often just relegate school to this reading, writing, arithmetic thing over

here on the corner.

It's like, no, no, this is a powerhouse. And if we can regain our foothold, we take back over this kind of nuclear weapon for forming a civilization. So it's a big deal.

No, you mentioned the word paideia. It's all about worldview formation, right? And public school forms young people in a worldview that they are a master unto themselves, or really that they are a master unto themselves. Really what it is, is you're just part of the machine to purchase products in a capitalist society, and therefore you need a job to do that, and you need to be a productive member of society.

Whereas before it was, it was a loftier vision of, we have certain ideals in our society that are rooted in transcendental realities, being God, of course, and that even the founding of our own country rests in the reality that there is a divinity that endows upon us all the rights that we have. Whereas in progressive schooling, it's, no, we, the system, and the government give you those rights. And it's a completely different worldview of utilitarianism and the total control of the state versus one in which our education is here to liberate you, to think for yourself, to think logically, to think within the tradition.

And these are the most important values that we hold, and that these important things come from something higher than us. And it's worth keeping the flame alive. That's a completely different vision.

Totally different. Yeah. It's a completely different.

Yeah. And that's, this is the, I think, helpful for parents to realize that, because it's easy, especially when you get into the high school years and school down the street has the bigger stadium lights and the bigger offerings and, well, let's go down there where there's more, again, kind of consumer mindset, more offerings, more opportunities, missing the entire DNA of school and to the point you're making. I've heard you quote DuBois before on the idea of, share a little bit of that, because I think it really hits home this point.

Yeah. Yeah. One of the things we're riffing on here is utilitarianism and credentialing for the world of work.

And so W.E.B. DuBois, he has a very famous quote and he was in a, actually, and just as a sidebar, African-Americans actually have a lot to do with classical education and other peoples of diverse backgrounds that is really also a sort of suppressed and lost story. But on this point of utilitarianism, W.E.B. DuBois had a debate with Booker T. Washington about the direction of American schooling. Booker T. Washington wanted to go into the pragmatic direction like John Dewey.

And he believed that African-Americans would benefit most from an education that gave them practical work and skills so that they could first begin to get a foothold in American society and have jobs. We just got to start with jobs. They have to have an economic value.

And DuBois said, absolutely not. It's really about liberating them and liberating the life of the mind or else there'll be a different kind of servile state. So DuBois famously wrote and said, quote, I insist that the object of all true education is not to make men carpenters, but to make carpenters men.

And that's about forming a virtuous person, forming, taking a young boy, an adolescent, and making them into a man is a lot of formation is happening there. It's not just, hey, young immature boy who is obsessed with youth culture and whatever music you're listening to and your movie obsessions and your gaming. Let's just take that person and you just stay the same wonderful person you are today.

But now we're going to get you a job. That's absolutely not what we're about. But public school education has no problem with that.

And where are we today in the world? And I talk to business owners all the time that that gaming adolescent now with a degree in his hand tries to go get a job and the work ethic and the sense of entitlement, all of these things that have been formed in the pi day of that child now impacts our country and impacts our world. And I mean, there's so much that's, I mean, I look at these statistics all the time on just the number of young men and women in particular, they don't even want to get married or have children like that is so out of step with the modern narrative. And, uh, and these things are integral.

I mean, just our birth rates alone are going to be cataclysmic to our civilization and to even try it. How's enrollment can look in schools in 20 years when no one's had kids. I mean, so these are things that are really affecting our civilization and they're, you know, they're downstream of the type of educational environment that they're in.

So, yeah, I, I think we underestimate the cultural capital that is now burned out. And what I mean by that is, um, that, that, that the cultural capital of Christianity and the American polis of a traditional American polis has been burned out a while now. And what that meant is that, is that parents were very purposeful in how they parented their children.

Schools really saw more than what they were doing as credentialing. It was about education and formation. Um, and even when in, even in the 1950s and 60s, you know, after the progressive school movement, there was again, a lot of that cultural capital was still there, but it's gone now in a way that I think is, is really quite alarming such that, you know, basic, basic sort of response, sense of duties and responsibilities, basic etiquette about how you operate, opening a door for somebody to writing a thank you note after getting in a job interview to I've had situations where there are students who are in graduate school and I call them up to offer them a teaching job.

And the response is, Hey, so, Hey, can you come in for an interview? Uh, this week, you know, let's say it's, this really happened. It's a true story. I called up a young candidate, a phenomenal young person, and it was Tuesday and I was offering them to come in on Wednesday,

Thursday, Friday for an interview, or maybe it was Wednesday.

And the, and the person on the phone said, yeah, um, actually I was planning to leave with my friends for a concert up North tomorrow. And could we wait until Monday to do the interview? And I just thought you're a kid. I'm offering you your first job.

This is like the last thing that you should say to me. And in fact, I don't know that I, but this is just kind of, you know, I don't want to rag on the young people too much, but it's, it's a thing. But they're young people are who they are because of the education system and the general cultural system that said, you do you and you're, you know, and everybody's there to wait on you or it's child centered and all.

So again, these are, these are seismic level investments in a Christian classical school that, that are downstream of everything. I want to take a final break. And when we come back, I want to just get as specific as we can, because how you live this out in the classroom and in our homes is, is really the challenge.

I mean, I think the agreement is, yes, this is what we want to be doing, but what does it look like, especially when you've not had a classical upbringing yourself, which is still the norm for the vast number of parents and educators that are leading this movement, we've not really experienced it. Although there is a second generation starting to come through, but we'll be right back after the break. 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 today.

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. Michael, earlier you were sharing with us that great quote from Du Bois on really raising up men, not just the carpenters.

Talk a bit more about that, because I think that really helps us set the stage for what is classical Christian education and how is it lived out today in this modern and demanding world. Yeah,

absolutely. To restate his quote, he says, quote, I insist the object of all true education is not to make men carpenters, but to make carpenters men.

He's implying that there are different visions of education out there, and some are valid and some are counterfeit visions of education. He says the expression true education, he implies that there's an alternative to what's being pushed. For Du Bois, the counterfeit notion of education does no such thing to force.

It doesn't allow students to be liberated, right? It allows them to stay in this world of youth culture with their blinders on, and it doesn't give them the hooks to understand really important things in our society that older generations take for granted, like freedom of speech, the Second Amendment, the Bill of Rights. They can take for granted the importance of these things. Really, for Du Bois, if education is all about the practical and getting young people to enter the world of work and be a productive member of society to purchase things, what it means is we're sacrificing an education that gives them the knowledge of our history so that they can really understand what is most important and most valued that they should pass on to their own children.

Yeah. Think about the title of Leonard Sachs' book, *Boys Adrift*. There's very much a culture of young people that are adrift, depression rates, anxiety.

So much of it is they don't know who they are. They don't know where they fit in. They're not choosing things like marriage we talked about before.

So this is, again, I think a word that is very encouraging to parents that this weird education that they've subscribed to is not so weird. It's actually what's built the society around you, and it's very much worth leaning into. So just in the few minutes we have left, just other words of encouragement to school leaders, to parents? Yeah.

Yeah. And I'll just tie in a couple different things here on this point of utilitarianism. There's another Catholic thinker named Joseph Pieper, and he argues that the modern world is marked by total labor, and that the original meaning behind leisure and liberal arts has really been lost.

And what we're doing is when we give kids a progressive education, oftentimes in our public schools, they're subjugated by what we would call the servile arts. And so what ends up happening is people's lives are dominated by this vision where really being a worker is their entire identity, a worker and a consumer. And that's not what we want for our young people, and it also doesn't help preserve American society.

There's a great line that I'll quote here from Michael Rose in his new book, *The Subversive Art of Classical Education*, and I think this really hits home at our point. So again, contrast this with a vision of education that's purely utilitarian and practical and job training. Michael Rose says, quote, When a 15-year-old learns the progression from Greek philosophy to Roman law, from medieval synthesis to Renaissance humanism, from Reformation theology to Enlightenment

political theory, he gains more than cultural literacy.

He gains a map. And with that map, he can navigate claims about rights, justice, equality, authority, and freedom, end quote. I think that's really powerful.

And it helps show how young people need to understand where all of these concepts in our society and government come from, the things that we value. And a lot of that capital has been lost because of progressive education. Yeah, I just find it ironic all these folks are out protesting.

Do you not realize you have the right to protest because of the system that you're committed to tearing down? Yeah, I'm in Minnesota, and I don't want to necessarily wade into the political debate on it, but what's so lost on these folks is, again, what Michael Rose was just talking about. For example, this I find hilarious. It's the theory of non-contradiction, right? I mean, it's sort of like you have no logic.

We have a group of people in Minneapolis currently protesting enforcement of borders. But what they do is they harass fellow citizens by putting up artificial borders that they've built themselves and stopping people's cars in the middle of the road and asking them to show ID. I have seen a video on this.

It's the craziest thing in the world. And so, again, we don't need more critical thinking. We need more logical thinking, and classical Christian education is the way to do this.

Well, and yeah, we could go on and on. We need to wind our time down, but there's a term I've seen recently called meta-modernism, which is this idea that it's beyond post-modernism. Now we're allowing absolute and complete contradictory realities into our life.

Two plus two is five, and that's perfectly fine. We're not going to even bother to try to sort all those oppressive, absolute things out. And it's just, that's the scary point at which the civilization falls apart.

So I think the bigger thesis here is what is classical Christian? And in fact, what it is, is not just getting a job. It's not just forming who you're going to become. It's literally saving our civilization.

It's a pretty audacious statement that you've helped us see, I think, very well and very convincingly. So any final thoughts to our listeners? I just encourage everyone to really consider what options they have around them. There's homeschooling, there's hybrid schools, there's brick and mortar classical schools, there's charter, there's religious affiliated classical.

It's really transforming lives. I did my doctoral dissertation on the study of classical education and what it is. And I am so astonished at the results that I see, the fruit that is born for all kinds of communities, socioeconomically and ethnically diverse communities coming together as a community united around a mode of education and having a lofty vision for what a human

person is capable of like W.E.B. Du Bois had.

And that when you hold fast that vision, it transforms people's lives. In the Catholic world, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and others who brought education to the masses and particularly to underserved communities, minorities, the poor, they did not give them a different education than what the elite received. So Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, she's part of the founders' generation in that she brought them the best education possible from her school, such that wealthy Americans were sending their children to her schools, which were meant for anyone.

And so it's amazing what this model of education, which is, as Jeremy Tate famously says, classical education just used to be called education. That's really, that's a great ending point. And we're, this is not about some new trendy thing.

This is literally, I think Lewis talks about that when you get lost, maybe the best path home is just to turn around and go back from the way from which you came. And so we're really re-entrenching in that, which has formed most of the world around us that we love and appreciate. So Michael, thanks for giving us that walk through our history, through the story.

Love hearing your story. Thank you for helping us continue to gain such an understanding and love for classical Christian education. Thanks so much for having me.

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