

# Veritas Classical Academy

## News – December/January

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### New Class and New Teacher

Rejoice with us as we praise God for adding enough students midyear to separate out the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class and hire a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. We will be adding six students total, in grades K, 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

Jana Stuart, who has teaching experience in homeschool, private school and public school settings, will begin teaching the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class after Christmas break. We also plan to have a Kindergarten assistant to help Mrs. Polk with her class after break.

### 2006-2007 Enrollment

The Spring semester is upon us and that means it is time to begin thinking about enrollment for next school year. We will be hosting several Information Sessions throughout the Spring semester to help inform interested families about Veritas. Please check our website for dates and times of these meetings.

### Upcoming Dates

**December 15-** Last day before Christmas Break

**December 15-** Veritas Christmas Program at Wildwood Church, Norman, at 7pm.

**December 16-January 2-** Christmas Break

**January 3-** First day after Christmas Break

**January 12-** Last day of the Second Quarter

**February 2** – Veritas Spelling Bee

**February 2-** Information Session at Trinity Baptist Church from 7:00-8:30pm.

Please visit our website [www.veritasnorman.org](http://www.veritasnorman.org) for more information about all of these events, or call Rebecca at 850-5309.

### *Knowledge, Virtues, and Education (and a bit of Philosophy)*

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*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction—Proverbs 1.7, ESV*

*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding—Job 28.28, ESV*

These shouldn't be unfamiliar words for those who seek to educate their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Fearing the Lord is the starting point for any educational enterprise. Indeed, it is the *sine qua non* of coming to know anything. Peter, in his first letter, commands that we 'in [our] hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy' (3.15). He is speaking here in a context of 'suffering for righteousness' sake' (14) and in giving answers for our hope (15), but it bears equally when we come to think of knowledge. Setting Christ apart in our hearts must be first and foremost in the pursuit of truth. He is Truth and any attempt to arrive at truth apart from this bedrock is doomed to failure. This is so because when we aim at finding truth we aim at nothing short of Christ Himself.

Unfortunately, this hasn't been true in the history of philosophy. The whole of Western philosophy began with Thales' desire to explain creation apart from recourse to the supernatural. With this methodology, philosophers have sought to explain the world in terms that exclude God as creator of either the world they study or the mind they use to study it. Given this, it's no wonder that many Christians are quick to take Paul's admonition to avoid philosophies (Colossians 2.8) as Paul's rejection of all things philosophical.

What shall we do then with philosophy? G.K. Chesterton is said to have quipped, 'Good philosophy must exist, if only because bad

philosophy does.’ Indeed, he is absolutely right. Far from fleeing philosophy, we ought to be grateful that God has given the Church men who love Christ *and* who seek also to glorify Him by using their minds in submission to His word. There are men (and women) who are seeking, like Paul, to ‘take every thought captive to Christ’ (I Cor. 10.5). This is an imperfect venture, as sin still clouds the minds of believers. But this oughtn’t to dissuade us. If we wish to find a particular (and refreshing) instance of this sort of good philosophy, we needn’t look any further than the current resurgence of linking virtues with knowledge.

My optimism is not often met with reciprocation. Along with a general disdain for all things philosophical, many seek to form a dichotomy between what is often called *heart knowledge* and its alleged opposite, *head knowledge*. There was even a popular song several years ago wherein the chorus exclaimed, ‘Get into my heart/And out of my head’. This sort of thinking has led to an anti-intellectualism in the Church and unnecessary distrust of deeper thinking. But this needn’t be so. Indeed, one is hard pressed to find evidence for such a dichotomy in a biblical worldview. The heart, the mind and the will (to name but three) are all part of the immaterial makeup of humans—and all ought to be cultivated equally. We might say that they are simply perspectives on that part of man not made up of dust from the earth. In fact, I would submit that there is such an intimate connection between these faculties that any attempt to separate them leads to a disjointed (and unbiblical) view of the soul and of humanity in general.

That said, it seems to be entirely appropriate to explore each faculty of the immaterial aspects of our being in its own distinct way. In particular, I would like to look (briefly) at the life of the Christian mind. I maintain that there are distinct virtues that deal specifically with the intellect. What are commonly referred to as ‘moral virtues’ (e.g., the seven cardinal virtues), deal more generically with how we ought to conduct ourselves. Paul plainly teaches these when he tells the Galatians that ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control’ (5.22-23). We ought to live lives that exhibit these character traits. In teaching children these virtues, we focus on the heart. We seek to instill self-control, patience, love, joy, etc., in the children we educate. These are important virtues and we ought to focus our efforts

in training up children who love Christ and their neighbors in these ways.

The intellectual virtues, however, are aimed specifically at the life of the mind. Unfortunately, these virtues have received little attention until of late. What education has become (even in Christian schools) is an attempt to fill minds with propositions and the heart with morals (note again the implicit dichotomy between minds and hearts). Now, as far as it goes, this is fine; we ought to do such things. Children ought to know that ‘ $2+2=4$ ’ and that ‘The *War of 1812* was fought in 1812’. Likewise, they ought to be taught that self-control is to be desired over instant gratification and that loving my neighbor means that sometimes I ought to lose in order to let someone else experience the feeling of winning. But if this is the only approach we take, then we run the risk of producing students who think they can be dispassionate about their knowledge or that their emotions shouldn’t be (in some way) in submission to their knowledge or worse yet, that their hearts have nothing to do with their heads (or vice-versa).

Intellectual virtues aim at supporting the production of knowledge. Or, perhaps more specifically, their end is to produce a culture *within* the student *himself*, which will provide the student the opportunity to become a student who loves to know God and His world. We may consider the intellectual virtues the soil that supplies the life of the mind with the nutrients for knowledge. Virtue is shown not just when a student gives his lunch money to help another buy lunch but also when he seeks to have beliefs that are coherent with one another and are produced by the honest and courageous pursuit of truth. This can only begin, as noted above, with the fear of the Lord. Without this initial and primary virtue, all else is lost.

I would like to see what has been torn asunder put back together. We shouldn’t separate intellectual virtues from moral virtues. We cannot have one without the other, lest we do violence to the completeness of the souls of our students. We need whole students, students who *love truth*. One cannot ‘love truth’ if he has been taught to keep his mind separate from his heart. ‘Love’ and ‘truth’ involve one another to such an extent that to lack one is to lack the other. We must, therefore, emphasize both sorts of virtues in the education of children. This emphasis, I believe, will prove to be another of our distinctives here at Veritas.

-Josh Spears; 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher