

Spring 2022

## A Call to Family-Centered, Eternity-Focused Education Aimee Smith

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### Recommended Citation

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A Call to Family-Centered, Eternity-Focused Education

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Southeastern University/CC Plus

EDUC 5183: Christian Pedagogy

Dr. David Masterson

April 26, 2022

## A Call to Family-Centered, Eternity-Focused Education

“We are at risk because modern pedagogy has severed the vital link between knowing and doing, because the moral marrow of who we are and what our purposes are is being schooled out of our children, and because we have become uncertain of our norms and have abandoned education’s transcendent and ennobling ends.”

David Hicks, *Norms and Nobility*, page ix

We are at risk. This one simple statement produces many questions. *Are we at risk? What is this risk? Who are we?* If the statement is true, can anything be done to avoid the risk? In the quote above from the introduction to *Norms and Nobility*, David Hicks claims we are at risk because of three main threats:

1. Modern methods of education separate knowing from doing.
2. Moral instruction and life purpose are stolen from younger generations.
3. A normative, transcendent standard has been removed from education.

In considering the above questions about Hicks’ claim, a working definition of *risk* must first be considered: a hazard, to encounter danger (Webster). Therefore, Hicks is stating we are in danger. But who are *we*? Since Hicks is a university president, and due to the inclusion of “pedagogy” in the above quote, a logical explanation defines *we* as those affected by education: everyone in our culture. Therefore, his claim is that all in our culture are in danger.

Yes, we are at risk. We are at risk of eternal separation from God and a temporal lack of purpose. We are at risk of thinking this world is all that exists and being surprised by eternity. We are at risk of not knowing why we are alive and not learning how to live with others. We are at risk of relational strife and internal struggle. We are at risk of division and hatred. We are at risk of a culture in chaos. Yes, we are at risk.

This risk, however, is not fundamentally because of the pedagogy of modern education. We are at risk because the family is no longer the primary source for the education of our culture; yet we are no more at risk than any other culture in history in which parents were spiritually broken. Our risk is not unique. In order to overcome the current risks, parents first need a transformative experience with Jesus so they can provide their children with an education focused on eternal purposes while understanding their responsibility in education and avoiding an additional risk of elitism.

The call to overcome the risk begins with a call to the family to return to education. In Scripture, Christian parents receive the instruction to raise their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4 *King James Version*). Education will overflow from this primary relationship between parents and children. The call to overcome the risk, however, necessitates a call for parents to first return to Jesus so they are able to pursue such nurture and admonition. Parents must possess that which needs to be passed on: recognition of their own *imago Dei*, their creation in the image of God, and reception of the redemption offered through Jesus, His invitation to be bought back for God’s original purposes. The outcome of education hinges on this primary relationship between parent and Jesus as the parent can say to the child, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1 *New American Standard Bible*). Once this primary relationship is established, growing, and flourishing, parents are capable of leading their children in an education focused on the eternal personhood of the child, the eternal perspective of an earthly life, and the eternal purposes for that education.

Once the parent has established his or her own relationship with Jesus, an eternal focus in their child’s education becomes possible. By considering King Arthur’s sword in the stone, parents can focus on an education oriented in eternity and a relationship with Jesus. Yet along

with the sword and the stone, parents and students both need a mirror with which to understand their context. A *paideia* approach to education focused on the whole person of the child lays a cornerstone for that education and acknowledges the eternal nature of the child. A focus on developing the child's *imagination*, a primary consideration with young children but equally as important in older years, acts as a mirror in reflecting the *imago Dei*, the image of God in the child, and nurtures an eternal perspective on life. Finally, *normative standards* arm the student with eternal purposes through which they can wisely wield their weapons, the swords of knowledge and skills gained through their education.

#### Paideia: A Cornerstone Recognizing Eternal Persons

In the first focus for an eternal education, *paideia* acts as a cornerstone by allowing the parent to nurture the child as an eternal person created as a noble being with body, soul, and spirit. All aspects of the child are important when *paideia* is the focus of education, and as creatures made in God's image, they are "destined for immortality" and should be viewed as such (Youmans 3). Through the prophet Isaiah, God foretold the coming of His Son as "a precious cornerstone for the foundation" and declared that anyone believing in Him would be stable and undisturbed (Isaiah 28:16 *New American Standard Bible*). The apostle Peter expanded this picture to include believers as living stones, part of the spiritual house of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (I Peter 2:9). Because of the nobility of people, the education of children should focus on a goal of the child being formed into the image of Christ (Hicks 99). A *paideia* approach to education recognizes the nobility of children and their image in Christ, yet it avoids the risk of egocentrism through practices of generosity and habits of attention.

Without a focus on Jesus at the center of education, we are at risk of one of the dangers identified by David Hicks in *Norms and Nobility*: egocentrism (91). Apart from Jesus, the

student becomes the center of academic endeavors. Leigh Bortins, founder of Classical Conversations, focuses on this danger in *Classical Christian Education Made Approachable* through a series of bubble diagrams showing the difference when the student or God is the focal point of education (7-11). Through Classical Conversations programs, she has developed a curriculum aiming to place God back at the center and resist the danger of egocentrism when self is central. A paideia approach to education lays a solid foundation by returning to a place where “God in Christ firmly occupie(s) the position of supreme value” (Hicks 99).

In order to avoid this risk of egocentrism, educators should intentionally pursue the development of generosity, a focus on others, within the child. Parents can look toward a “trio of Proverbs dealing with the subject of generosity” found in Proverbs 11:24-25 (Masterson 2) which sets forth a plan to develop a generous soul. By giving of one’s time (through watering), talent (by scattering), and treasure (by giving), students develop a focus on others rather than self and grow in the “quality of (their) love and the depth of (their) commitment to serve others” (Masterson 12). In the end, this focus on others not only avoids the risk of egocentrism, it also increases the abundance of life the child experiences. In this trio of Proverbs, the result is a *fat soul*, an abundance of life promised by Jesus in John 10:10 for the purpose for which He came to Earth. While this abundant life begins with the work of Christ on the cross, it must be developed through a process of spiritual maturation. While nurturing an eternal person through a paideia approach to education, parents help nurture the generous heart that leads to an abundant life and resists the risk of egocentrism and its selfish focus.

In addition to a focus on generosity, a focus on habits aids in the paideia approach to education which recognizes the noble nature of children. Peter Leithart claims habits of restraint, courage, concentration, attention, and patience are necessary for a solid education (3). Habits

such as these recognize the need for character and moral development in the child in addition to academic and skills development, and they assist in the focus on others through generosity. Specifically, habits of attention help the child grow in self-awareness through the spiritual maturation process, help the child recognize the ways God is at work in the world around him or her, and help the child see the centrality of God and Jesus in all aspects of life. The focus on others and on character is part of a *paideia* approach to education. Once the cornerstone of education is established by laying a foundation in the eternal child of a generous focus on others and self-aware habits of character, a mirror provides an understanding of eternal perspective.

#### Imagination: A Mirror Reflecting Eternal Perspective

For a second eternal focus in education, *imagination* acts as a mirror reflecting the image of God in the child and nurturing an eternal perspective in the midst of a temporal life on earth. As long as people see through the dim veil of an earthly perspective, the imagination acts as a bridge to connect the visible with the invisible, the temporal with the eternal, the natural with the supernatural. Essentially, imagination helps develop figurative eyes to see that more exists beyond the visible world. This eternal focus matches the eternal nature of children. Imagination begins in a sinful, fallen state which must be both redeemed and developed. While parents cannot control the redemption of the imagination, they can assist the development of it. This focus is crucial for parents because “if parents don’t actively cultivate a godly imagination, the devil will!” (Youmans 9). While a focus on developing the imagination begins early in life, it should continue to be a central focus throughout the education of a child. In order to develop the child’s imagination, parents can edify the image of God within the child, provide space for creativity and wrestling with ideas, and fill their minds with stories of heroes.

A critical starting place for developing the imagination is for the parent to recognize the image of God within the child. As discussed above, the child is a noble being because of the work of Christ and being created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). With this *imago Dei*, children possess the ability to learn and receive instruction (Cox 17), yet the *imago Satanae*, image of Satan, is also at work pulling them away from an eternal perspective. This work of evil within them seeks to steal their imagination and direct their gaze to merely the temporal. This image resists the work of God within a child's life, so the parent must draw out the truth of Christ within by edifying qualities of God which are evident within the child (17). As Cox further claims, the primary role of the teacher is the healthy edification of the learner (23). Parents can fulfill this purpose by pointing out their child's creativity, diligence, organization, compassion, and more qualities which reflect the image of God. In so doing, they help the child see the image of God within themselves and offer a mirror which nurtures the imagination to gain an eternal perspective of life.

In addition to identifying the image of God within the child, parents can develop the reflective nature of the imagination by offering space and time for children to creatively explore the world and wrestle with ideas encountered within it. In the busyness of modern days, parents often fear allowing their children to be bored. Boredom, however, can be a gift. This is the gift of time and space for their imaginations to awaken and become fully alive. Space of this sort counteracts the satirical advice of Anthony Esolon to "keep your children indoors as much as possible" (27) and to "never leave children to themselves" (47). Creative play opens the mind to the possibility of more than the mundane experiences right in front of the eyes. A stick becomes a sword, cardboard becomes a shield, and the mind becomes more alive. Over time, as the child matures, space for creative play paves the way for space for wrestling with big ideas. When

children ask questions, parents can resist the urge to simply state the answer. Questions can generate more questions and engage the imagination to consider ideas beyond the obvious. Through creativity and wrestling, the imagination expands and the child's perspective of life also expands to include the possibility that there is more than meets the eye in the reality of life. This space expands the capacity for an eternal perspective through which God is active and reflected.

An additional manner for developing the child's imagination is filling the child's life with stories of mentors and heroes. These stories offer guidance for the imagination rather than leaving the child to his own devices in isolated creativity. Without such stories, a void would be left in which the devil would take advantage. These examples of godly characters, whether real or fictional, provide content with which the student can wrestle and aim to emulate. They become images of the nature of God within man and are like "a pack of dynamite, ready to blow any mountain of heaped-up conformity and dullness to the sky" (Esolen 146). Such conformity and dullness are the antithesis of an engaged imagination, and they prevent a perspective of seeing beyond the natural. Children need to see beyond their current reality in order to recognize who they can become. Stories of heroes fuel the child's imagination to consider who they can become within Jesus. By incorporating stories of the saints and real-life heroes, parents and students can connect the God-like qualities to real people, and thus, to themselves.

Developing such an imagination is only possible in the context of a loving relationship. Cox asserts "evidence from a number of sources tells us that love is the most powerful moral force in the universe," and Youmans claims love is significant in the "teacher-learner dynamic" (Youmans 21). Strong relationships, primarily within the family as previously discussed, provide fertile soil in which the imagination can grow and flourish. Due to their relationship with the children, loving parents can assist the development of the child's imagination through edifying

the *imago Dei* within the child, providing space for wrestling with creativity and consideration of big ideas, and offering abundant stories of heroes and mentors as examples of who the child can become. By doing so, they help the child gain awareness of the reality of life beyond what they see and understand the eternal perspective of an earthly life and its transcendent nature.

### Normative Standards: A Sword Wielding Eternal Purpose

As a third eternal focus for education, *normative standards* provide the student with wisdom focused on eternal purpose as they use the knowledge and skills gained in education as a sword. Normative standards are crucial because, as educators focus on the *paideia* approach to educate the whole student and develop the imagination, they also continue teaching knowledge and skills of the basic academic subjects of math, history, literature, science, language, and others. Without purpose, such knowledge and skills become dangerous swords that can be used destructively against other people. Students are only prepared to wield such weapons when they understand their purpose. Normative standards insist the student think about the grander purpose of life and value of people as they consider how to use the information they have gained through their education.

Without such normative standards, yes we are at risk. We are at risk of students leaving school “somewhat confident and somewhat haughty in the means they possess, but incapable of knowing and following their human destiny wisely and virtuously” (Hicks 104). Through a values-free, non-normative education, modern schools do rob students of the possibility of enjoying an abundant, full life. Hicks’ idea echoes the words of C.S. Lewis in claiming, “Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither” (Lewis 134). Hicks go so far as to claim that teaching a student without an eternal perspective, and understanding of the moral implications of an education, essentially unlooses on the world both

“a murderer and victim” (99). Armed with knowledge, the student becomes a threat to both self and others. Students must be taught the importance of heaven and eternity as the overarching purpose for their education and their existence on earth to avoid this risk.

When including such standards, normative questions provide students with context for the rest of their lives. By the modern school’s approach to learning, highlighted in the primary Hicks quote of this paper, students are robbed of the opportunity to gain understanding of this context. They miss wrestling with questions of what *should* and *ought* to be done rather than simply learning what *can* be done (Hicks 7). A focus on normative learning in education contributes to the student’s opportunity to gain an eternal perspective. Normative questions include “What is the purpose and meaning of human existence? What are man’s absolute rights and duties? What is good, and what is evil?” (103). These types of questions address the universal needs of education as they address the universal needs of human beings. Students must be offered guidance in such questions as they seek to understand the purpose of the world and their place within it.

When considering the inclusion of normative learning to focus on the eternal in education, the teaching of dogma is essential. Everything in education requires a foundation. In classical education aligned with the Trivium, grammar knowledge lays this foundation for all future studies in math, science, and other academic subjects. When presenting such facts, a teacher is essentially offering a *dogma* to the student as “a settled opinion; a principle” (Webster). Such dogma, the grammar, lays the foundation. Normative learning also requires a dogma be taught rather than merely turning students loose with ideas to wrestle with on their own without context.

A further definition of *dogma* extends the focus of classical, Christian education beyond the grammar of the trivium and includes normative standards: “a doctrinal notion, particularly in matters of faith and philosophy” (Webster). Students should also be taught dogmas of philosophical beliefs and the meaning of life in addition to the dogma of science or history. They need this “groundwork for moral growth” (Masterson). Modern adults often resist telling a child what to think, but children cannot learn *how* to think without first receiving a *what* with which they can wrestle. Dogmatic beliefs must first be taught before it can be accepted, so students must be taught dogma as content which they can choose to accept or reject (Hicks 69). Once a student possesses dogma from a trusted adult, they possess ideas that can and should be challenged through dialectic wrestling.

This type of dialectic wrestling enhances the potential for the student to gain an eternal perspective of life and wield their sword of knowledge wisely. Because of a dogmatic foundation, students can question and contemplate deep ideas of normative questions surrounding the purpose of life and man’s place in the world. The student can begin to understand his or her purpose as a noble creature made in God’s image. If students wrestle well, they will choose to accept the dogmatic principles of truth, living a life of generosity and receiving the abundance of life found only in Jesus.

Normative questions assist in the development of a generous person who can develop a fat, abundant soul as previously discussed. Without questions pondering the purpose of life and existence of people, relativism and humanism take root. Yes, we are at risk. When education is focused in the self, the conscience rebels (Hicks 99) because the soul realizes there is more to life than that which meets the eye. Classical, Christian education resists the urge toward a self-focused secularization of education (Leithart 9) and instead emphasizes the necessity of an

eternal perspective when educating children. Through normative questions, the goal of education shifts to heart transformation rather than behavior modification (Youmans 7) as part of the pursuit of the *imitatio Christi*, the reflection of Christ within the growing child, and the child can begin to live in the abundance of life offered by Jesus.

### Considerations on Implementing a Family-Centered, Eternity-Focused Education

As parents embrace their call to involvement in their children's education and receive their own transformation through Jesus, they are able to offer an education focused in eternity. The sword of norms cultivates eternal purpose; the stone of paideia recognizes eternal persons; the mirror of imagination develops eternal perspective. This type of family-centered, eternity-focused education can be aided by principles of classical, Christian education. Yet, the family who chooses to embrace such an education focused on eternal factors must consider three crucial reminders. First, parents should intentionally set the course, the *pedagogy*, for education. Second, they should remember their role and responsibility as parents and educators. Finally, they should resist the additional risk of elitism. By following these cautions, the family can implement a family-centered, eternity-focused education within the home.

When implementing a classical, Christian education within the home, parents maintain the freedom to intentionally determine the course of their pedagogy, their educational plan which includes their vision, content, and methods. Parents need not, however, begin with a blank slate. Just as students need dogma of belief with which to wrestle and own their beliefs, so do parents benefit from a dogmatic manifesto of a paideia approach to education. Such a manifesto provides parents information with which they can wrestle in setting their own pedagogy. Mortimer Adler offers such a dogma in his 1982 *Paideia Proposal* which he wrote on behalf of the Paideia Group. He proposes three objectives for education: personal growth, citizenship preparation, and

occupation training. First, he claims schools should provide students with every possible opportunity for personal growth. Next, he adds a further objective to nurture understanding of civics and government. Third, his focus for occupational training includes “general, non-specialized training” (Adler 17). Most people would agree with his first two objectives because they are not clearly defined, but the Christian educator notices a significant problem: eternity is neglected. Adler’s proposal reflects the very type of education in which David Hicks claims we are at risk. By considering this proposal, however, educators can wrestle with Adler’s ideas, weigh them against the normative standards of Scripture, then keep some ideas while abandoning others. Parents can follow the same process to consider pedagogical possibilities from other programs. After such wrestling, parents are prepared to set their own vision, content, and methods for education, and they can consider David Hicks cautions against the risks of modern education in setting their pedagogy.

For their vision, parents should resist the focus of modern education to “sever the vital link between knowing and doing” which Hicks claims is part of the problem causing our current risk (ix). Knowing and doing must accompany one another just as faith and works. By faith, one knows the truth. By works, one shows the truth. Even while pursuing eternity in people, perspective, and purpose, knowing and doing can be severed. Parents and students alike must act out of their knowledge about eternity. This knowledge is reflected in the action of loving one another in word and deed. The Christian’s vision for education should include, in one way or another, the idea of knowing God in heart relationship as well as head knowledge and the further goal of making Him known through word and deed.

In their content, parents should resist the modern tendency to school out of their children “the moral marrow of who we are and what our purposes are” (Hicks ix). Moral meaning is

critical. Without it, the structure of life crumbles just as a bone without its marrow. This moral meaning should flow from a foundational grounding in Scripture and the truth of God's Word. To continue the exhortation for vision above, the knowing of Scripture must be combined with the doing of Scripture. Educational content must include academic material of mathematics, history, and literature, but God's Word must be primary. Scripture can be woven throughout all academic studies and lays the foundation against which all other studies should be measured. As long as the Bible is the primary content in the educational pedagogy, a variety of academic content will be beneficial.

With their methods, parents should resist the modern state of being "uncertain of our norms" and abandoning "education's transcendent and ennobling ends" (Hicks ix). Christians have no need to be uncertain. They possess the authority of the Bible on which to lay their foundation of certainty. The Bible contains real answers to the normative questions of life: What is good? What is my purpose? What about life after death? Why am I here? While crafting a plan for methods to follow in education, the transcendent, eternal purpose of children should always be of utmost consideration. Christian parents, through faith in the work of the Holy Spirit in their children's lives, need not fear the dialectic wrestling seasons of their children's development. They can intentionally include these dialectic conversations as an integral part of their educational methods as they lead their children toward normative standards and transcendent understanding.

One remaining question when implementing a family-centered, eternity-focused education concerns the responsibility of parents and teachers. Where exactly is the line between their responsibility and the responsibility of the child? To obey their calling, parents are responsible for casting vision, selecting content, and implementing methods. However, they do

not possess responsibility for the outcome. Parents cannot guarantee their students will choose a life of virtue, and they must allow their students to make their own choices. This ability to choose is part of the child's nobility as potential heir of God's kingdom, pending their choice to receive the gift of salvation. Therefore, parents must make the difficult choice to relinquish control of the results of education and trust the Holy Spirit to accomplish His purpose in their children's lives. Therefore, in addition to determining vision, content, and methods, two primary responsibilities of parents include remembering they are raising eternal nobility and modeling eternal character within a temporal world.

By focusing on the eternal, noble nature of their children, Christian parents remember they are raising royal heirs as James reminds believers in James 2:5 by asking, "Did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and *heirs of the kingdom* which He promised to those who love Him?" (*New American Standard Bible*). This remembrance is part of the role of parents in education. Because of this view of children as future nobility, Christian parents should pursue ennobling ends, rather than merely temporal goals, in education with a view toward eternity. By pursuing an eternal perspective of the nature of children, parents remember their children are "rooted in the future, through the Resurrection of Jesus" (Masterson 16). This remembrance sets the stage for the rest of education and inspires parents to seek first God's kingdom (Matthew 6:33) and to model a hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) as they encourage and pray for their children to do the same as the royal heirs that they are. Seeking God's kingdom first, however, is very practical as even the temporal moments of life can be holy. Any pursuit can be a noble pursuit as "Christian holiness elevates the significance of everything" including the sparrow and the mustard seed (Hicks 100). Any moment of education can be holy as parents fulfill their responsibility to remember the eternal, noble nature of their children.

Yet, this type of eternal education and living must be implemented within the context of a temporal world. Within this context of temporal living, all learning occurs within the context of relationships. Thus, parents should model a hunger for and pursuit of eternity combined with humility in relationships during a temporary sojourn on earth. As Paul instructed Timothy, humility must be predominant with knowledge, contentment must be combined with godliness, and endurance must be practiced through faith (I Timothy 6:4-12). In order to live with others in a loving manner while pursuing a classical education, these character qualities of humility, contentment, and endurance are essential, and the parent should both teach and model them to their students as a component of their *paideia* education. This does not demand perfection of parents in relationship. On the contrary, the humility parents must model begins with confession, forgiveness, and an understanding of their great need for redemption. As parents do so, they will grow in their ability to model eternal character to their children within this temporal world.

When implementing a family-centered, eternity-focused education, parents should consider one additional caution as they set their pedagogical course and remember their responsibility as educators. Even as the student begins to possess the sword of normative standards through eternal purpose, the stone of *paideia* as eternal persons, and the mirror of imagination for an eternal perspective, dangers still exist. With such classical ideas for education, one such risk is elitism. Classical education is at risk of perpetuating the elitism which Hicks himself claims began in ancient times and has never been shaken (78). Similar to the danger of egocentrism previously explored, the danger of elitism is a historically founded risk of the *paideia* approach in classical, Christian education.

While David Hicks calls for the “enobling of the masses”, classical terms such as *dogma*, *paideia*, and *imitatio Christi* can produce a polarizing effect and exclude many students and

families. This is not a new risk within the realm of classical education; the risk of elitism has historical roots. Glanville Downey notes the tendency of ancient education to exclude many people. In the days of Plato and other Greek philosophers, “neither in theory nor in practice was education thought of as something that was to be given to all people” and certainly not the everyday, average, ordinary citizen (Downey 339). In the early days of America, when classical education was in a season of heightened renewal, this form of education was still for the “elite minority” (Leithart 10). If classical education is kept from a majority of children, even through a foundational use of polarizing terminology viewed as elitist, children can miss the benefits of the enobling of the soul and the abundant life. This is not consistent with the view of Jesus about children. In passages such as Matthew 18, Jesus expressed the significance of children in His view. Because they are created in the image of God, all children possess the potential to grow into the imitation of Christ. A family-centered, eternity-focused education can be offered to all, but the risk of elitism must first be overcome through efforts to resist this risk. Elitism can be avoided by classical Christian educators through using welcoming terminology, pursuing people for Jesus, and appreciating the efforts of families in all forms of education.

A starting point to resist the polarizing, elitist risk is to discuss classical education with terms such as these: “image of God” rather than *imago Dei* and “imitation of Christ” rather than *imitatio Christi*. As rich as the terms *normative questions*, *dogma*, and *enobling souls* are, they often scare people away from a form of education which could, and should, be available to all. With time, people can certainly grow in their understanding of language and embrace these rich terms, but they will only experience that opportunity if they first experience an invitation to enter the world of classical education without intimidating vocabulary.

Additionally, classical educators can resist the risk of elitism in a noble form of education as they pursue people for Jesus as part of His body. If the culture is at risk, which it is, we cannot focus solely on our own children. If families have the God-given mandate to train up their children, which they do, parents need the help of Jesus. If parents first need the transformative work of Jesus in their own lives, which they do, they need the Church to pursue them for the Name of Jesus. We, the Church, cannot focus on our children alone. We must seek to strengthen the weak and pursue the lost. One risk of classical home education is an internal focus which looks not beyond the walls of the home. People need Jesus, and classical education is not a requirement for spiritual transformation. Many of the disciples who walked on earth with Jesus were “unschooled, ordinary men,” but they had been with Jesus (*Acts 4:13 New International Version*). These ordinary men became courageous warriors for Christ who turned the world upside-down. They most certainly were aware of their eternal nature, possessed an eternal perspective, and engaged whole-heartedly in eternal purposes. Jesus’ disciples experienced the classical learning by walking and talking with Jesus, but they did not need an explicit understanding of the trivium. They just needed Jesus. Therefore, the Church must pursue the lost and strengthen the weak first and foremost to know Jesus. Pursuits of classical education become secondary.

A further manner to resist the risk of elitism in classical education is for classical home educators to appreciate the efforts of families engaged in various forms of education. Families who choose public or private school, with whatever methods and curriculum, can still pursue these eternal ends. The type of schooling is not as important as the parents’ focus on equipping the child. If the child is in a form of school contradicting the truth of Scripture, whether about the child’s purpose or about eternity, yes the efforts of parents will be complicated. But parents can

still pursue equipping their children with a sword of norms, a stone of *paideia*, and a mirror of imagination. Knowing the terms of *paideia* or *dogma* is not even essential. Knowing the Word of God is. As parents take these cautions to avoid elitism as they set their pedagogical course, they will be able to implement a family-centered, eternity-focused education and overcome the risks of modern education.

David Hicks is right: we are at risk. Even though it is not a new risk, modern education is leading, and has already led, our culture down a dangerous path. Doing must accompany knowing. Morality must be taught. Normative understanding and transcendent purpose must not be ignored. To pursue such transcendent ends, home educators should implement a family-centered, eternity-focused pedagogy for their families. A *paideia* approach lays the cornerstone for an education focused on the entire person of the child; imagination provides the mirror to reflect God's image in the child; normative standards provide wisdom with which to wield the swords of knowledge and skills gained through education. Through norms, *paideia*, and imagination - the sword, the stone, and the mirror - parents can cultivate an education rich with eternal perspective and eternal purposes for their eternal children. In pursuing classical education, however, the risk is even greater than Hicks claims. In correcting one error, another problem could be encountered as some families and students are excluded from enobling ends of education. Parents pursuing a family-centered, eternity-focused education must remember the reality of focusing on eternity within the context of a temporal world. Jesus Himself must be preeminent in all educational endeavors if we desire to overcome the risks of living without understanding of eternity and without purpose on earth. If parents will receive a transformative experience with Jesus and take leadership of their family's education, they can guide their

children through a family-centered, eternity-focused education which overcomes the modern risks and prepares students for both this temporal life and the eternal life to come.

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