**Classical Ideas of Truth, Goodness and Beauty in a Charlotte Mason Curriculum**

**by Jeannette Tulis from the** [**Charlotte Mason Institute**](https://childlightusa.wordpress.com/author/childlightusa/) *Published on*[*October 31, 2010*](https://childlightusa.wordpress.com/2010/10/31/classical-ideas-of-truth-goodness-and-beauty-in-a-charlotte-mason-curriculum-by-jeannette-tulis/)

Even though I have been following Charlotte Mason’s ideas for nearly 20 years now, I still peek over the educational fence to view other methods of education.  When I see the ideas of the pursuit of Truth, Goodness and Beauty that are proposed through the classical model, the realization hit me upside of my head, “Ah! A Charlotte Mason curriculum has all of that and more!”  I see these are already integrated into Mason’s whole approach to education. Here is how I see the manifestation of these virtues in the some of the elements of a CM lesson plan and in Charlotte’s principles:

**Truth** – I so appreciate Francis Schaeffer’s reminder that all truth is God’s truth. In Christian education, we can present truth to our children, even if the material we are using is not explicitly Christian. There is a resonance in our spirit when we read or see something that matches up with what God says. It is His world and He made it and man in it for His glory.

Truth is evident in the practice of narration when we encourage our students to tell back what they have heard or read. In the recitation or written narration, the child strives to remember the facts with as much accuracy as possible. In the study of history, the student is encouraged to study original documents, to look at both sides of a conflict, to see the entire sweep of history as one story.

Truth is also valued in nature study where the student is urged to see and to replicate what is in front of him with much detail. Keeping a nature notebook is not to chronicle one’s own concept or feelings about nature; it is a record of the true form of what our Creator so marvelously designed.

Here is what Charlotte said about truth telling:

“The mother who trains her child to strict accuracy of statement about things small and great fortifies him against temptations to the grosser forms of lying.” (Vol. 1 *Home Education* p. 165)

**Goodness** – this is one quality that makes a book a living one. When the protagonist sincerely tries to do the right thing, the noble thing, the brave thing, despite all odds, we are hearing a story of redemption, part of THE story, part of HIS story. Our spirit cheers with the telling of goodness whether in a biography, fiction or poetry. Living books undergird nearly every lesson in a Charlotte Mason curriculum.  History, geography, science, art, music and economics are clothed in literary language. All these subjects come alive with stories of brave men and women attempting great deeds.

The pursuit of goodness is especially evident in Charlotte’s unique understanding of the way of the will and the importance of habit training in children.  The parent and the teacher are to guard carefully the formation of character in the student.

Charlotte’s words on goodness:

“There are good and evil tendencies in body and mind, in heart and soul; and the hope set before us is that we can foster the good so as to attenuate the evil.” (Vol. 6, *A Philosophy of Education*, p. 46)

**Beauty** – Our creator made us creative beings. We mirror Him when we appreciate His creation and when we create. Art is an extravagant beauty, it feeds us more than what we need just to exist or survive. It is a rich feast for the senses. Great art is a reflection of God’s truth, His images, His creation. A Charlotte Mason education is often compared to spreading a rich banquet in front of our students. This feast includes the beauty of nature study, poetry, picture study, composer study, Shakespeare, Plutarch and handicrafts.

This emphasis on the arts is what first drew me to Charlotte Mason and it is one aspect of her that keeps me enthralled. As I feed the soul of my students with the great masterpieces of art, music, poetry and literature, I am also partaking of the feast with them. When I share my delight and amazement in a nature study lesson, I come along side of them in the exploration of God’s magnificent creation. In passing on to my students the art of handicrafts, I am giving them a key to lifelong skills, to creating objects of beauty with the work of their own hands.

Here are some of Charlotte’s words on beauty:

“As for that aesthetic appetency . . . it dies of inanition when beauty is not duly presented to it, beauty in words, in pictures and music, in tree and flower and sky. The function of the sense of beauty is to open a paradise of pleasure for us.” (Vol. 6, *A Philosophy of Education*, p. 56)

If one accepts the idea that a classical education is about “Truth, Goodness and Beauty” then a Charlotte Mason education is a truly classical education in that we are presenting our students with great ideas. The wide room that Charlotte talks about is one in which we nurture the soul of the child with truth, goodness and beauty. Let us take heart in the work we are doing, confident that this educational endeavour will reap a rich harvest in the lives of our students.

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