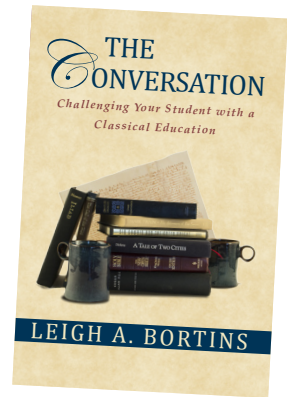


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## LEIGH A. BORTINS

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## CHAPTER TWO

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# RHETORIC DEFINED

“...it is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend himself with his limbs, but not of being unable to defend himself with speech and reason, when the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of his limbs. ...A man can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these, and inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly.”

—Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (1.1)

The last chapter described how confident parents can overcome obstacles. In this chapter, the focus moves from obstacles to the opportunities that await when you confront your fears. Educating classically through the high school years is rich with possibilities. I talked in *The Core* about the need to focus on specific grammatical content. In *The Question*, I addressed the awe and wonder that students experience when their middle school years center on questions. These foundations make guiding your child’s classical education through high school not only possible but also rewarding beyond your wildest imagination, especially if the coursework is surrounded by conversations. As you learn the art of **rhetoric** alongside your high school-aged students, you’ll

be developing the skills to have a rewarding and fruitful conversation about any subject you encounter.

Let's start by reviewing what "classical education" means. The words can sound intimidating, but they refer to a style of learning that is innate for each of us. Classical education recognizes that as humans, when we learn something new, we progress through three stages. The classical model names these three stages **grammar**, **dialectic**, and **rhetoric**.

**Grammar** is all about words and naming. Memorization is the most important tool in this stage, because when we begin to learn something new, we start by collecting concrete facts about it. In gardening, you learn terms for soil acidity, sunlight, and spacing of seeds. In plumbing, you learn the parts of a toilet and how to recognize different types of pipes. In auto repair, you learn the parts of an engine. In English, you learn vocabulary and memorize the parts of speech. In chemistry, you memorize the periodic table of elements. Because young children love to sing songs and parrot words back, the grammar stage comes naturally to children in the elementary years; however, everyone practices the art of grammar when they encounter something new. My book *The Core: Teaching Your Child the Foundations of Classical Education* explains the grammar stage in depth.

**Dialectic** is all about questions and relationships between ideas. When we learn something new, after we gather facts, we examine and analyze the facts we have collected, and we figure out how they fit together by asking questions. In gardening, you learn what plants grow well in what types of soil. You ask what will cause a plant to die in one environment and thrive in another. In plumbing, you learn how the parts of a toilet fit together. In auto repair, you learn how one part of the car affects another part. In English, you learn how the parts of speech fit together to form sentences, and you analyze others' writing and ask what makes a sentence "good." In chemistry, you ask how elements interact or why salt is used to extinguish electrical fires. The dialectic stage comes naturally to pre-teens who love to ask questions and debate ideas, but everyone of any age must practice this art when they learn something new. My book *The Question: Teaching Your Child the Essentials of Classical Education* breaks down the dialectic stage into manageable steps for a classical education at home.

That brings us to rhetoric, which is the main focus of this book. Rhetorical skills come naturally to young adults who are ready to progress from asking questions to making arguments, and from analyzing others' ideas to presenting their own. **Rhetoric** is all about conversations and expressing truth. Rhetoricians write essays, present hypotheses, lead discussions with others, and act on the knowledge they have gained about a new subject. In gardening, you might plant a tomato, harvest it successfully, and prepare a salad for your family. In plumbing, you repair a broken sink and teach someone else how to do the same. In auto repair, you explain to a worried customer what is wrong with his car and how to fix it. In English, you use your knowledge of sentence and paragraph structure to write a compelling essay about justice and freedom. In chemistry, you teach someone else how to balance an equation, or you use your knowledge of chemical reactions to bake bread, purify water on a camping trip, or develop a more fuel-efficient car. Notice how this stage of learning comes at the same time that high school students are ready to seek mentors, find practical applications for their learning through a part-time job or internship, and use their skills to benefit others by volunteering or taking part in a mission trip or service opportunity.

*We must teach our students to be both wise and humble as they attempt to separate truth from lies and persuasion from manipulation.*

As a mom of four boys, sports analogies come easily in my house. If they do for you, then you can think of your family's pursuit of truth through classical education as a football game. As you study vocabulary and memorize facts in the grammar stage, you are mastering the basics of the game. You trust your coach to provide you with the foundational skills you will need later. As you learn logic and practice asking good questions in the dialectic stage, you are refining your defense. You want to be able to recognize and tackle faulty arguments wherever they appear. As you learn public speaking and persuasion in the rhetoric stage, you are developing your offense. You want to be able to defend and carry the truth to others. For this reason, we must teach our students to be both wise and humble as they attempt to separate truth from lies and persuasion from manipulation.

*Is rhetoric truth-serving or self-serving?*

Most of us today think of rhetoric as a collection of sound bites in political debates: political pundits propounding propositions. One of the most common punch lines in popular jokes has something to do with either lawyers or politicians being liars. One reason is that these two professions stand out among careers that use public speaking. They can use the tools of rhetoric without being wise about its ends. Alternately, where “rhetoric” is not being used as a series of sound bites, we find it being used to emotionally manipulate us: images of sick animals parade before us while melancholy violins play in the background, demanding through our stomachs—not our brains—that we give the necessary twenty-nine dollars a month to save that sad-faced puppy or kitten on the screen. The organization behind this ad may base its actions on logical reasoning and be supported by ethical individuals, but logic and character do not play a major role in this kind of advertising. Instead, ad campaigns rely on proven emotional triggers to prompt action.

If we are going to teach students how to share their knowledge with the world and to be wise leaders, it matters that we reclaim the art of rhetoric as a means to seek truth for ourselves and to point others toward truth. Students are sensitive to that distinction as well. Matt Bianco, a homeschool dad who lives near our family, tutored my son William in twelfth grade. One weekend, Matt took the students to meet with other groups of students at a camp near Staunton, Virginia. The group of about fifty students and a handful of parents spent the afternoon and evening together, which culminated in a lively discussion as they sat around the fire. The next day, they were going to the nearby Blackfriars Playhouse to attend a performance of *Julius Caesar* at the American Shakespeare Center. In preparation, Matt wanted to lead the group in a discussion of whether Brutus should have assassinated Julius Caesar. As the conversation persisted, however, he discovered that the students had different plans.

“What is the theme of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*?” he asked.

“Loyalty!” one student responded.

“Patriotism,” said another.

“Rhetoric,” said another. This response was immediately followed by agreement from several other students.

With this prompt, the conversation turned to a discussion of the nature of rhetoric. The members of the group were divided over whether an act of persuasion should only be called rhetoric when a virtuous person is persuading someone toward truth, goodness, or beauty, or whether persuasion should still be called rhetoric when it is being used as a tool for deception, manipulation, or trickery. They understood intuitively that the *tools* of persuasion can be used for good or for evil.

When a speaker errs in the way he uses these tools, rhetoric turns into sophistry (persuasion for the speaker's gain rather than for truth). The Bible

*The tools of persuasion can be used for good or for evil.*

records an early incident that helps us to see the difference between rhetoric and sophistry. In Genesis chapter 3, the serpent asks Eve if God had actually told her not to eat from the trees in the garden. Eve responds that God had said they could eat from every tree but one: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which they must not eat, lest they die. The serpent tells her that she will not surely die. The last and most convincing thing he says to Eve is, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." If rhetoric were defined simply as the art of persuasion, the serpent would have to be judged as a mighty rhetorician, for Eve does, in fact, eat from the forbidden tree, and her husband, Adam, quickly follows suit. However, the serpent has distorted the truth of God's character, so he is demonstrating sophistry rather than rhetoric.

In fact, perversions of rhetoric like propaganda, brainwashing, demagoguery, and double speak are all the more reason for students to study rhetoric. As Edward Corbett writes in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, "citizens might thereby be put on their guard against the onslaughts of these vicious forms of persuasion" (25). Just as we should teach formal logic in order to prevent children from being taken captive by lies, we should teach rhetoric so that students may captivate others with the truth in high school and beyond.

The author of one of the first English treatises on rhetoric, Thomas Wilson (c. 1525–1581), lived during the Renaissance. Wilson studied rhetoric as a student at Cambridge, and at the age of twenty-eight he published *The Art of Rhetoric*. A few years after writing the book, Wilson had the opportunity to

put its principles to the test when he found himself charged with heresy and imprisoned in Rome during the Spanish Inquisition. Wilson needed to craft a convincing defense, but he would not deny his faith. His rhetorical skill enabled him to do both. He survived the Inquisition, and he practiced the art of rhetoric throughout the rest of his life. At various points, he served as a diplomat and then Secretary of State under Queen Elizabeth. He wrote about economics. He also translated the orations of the great speaker Demosthenes from Greek into English, using them to make a political argument about England's relationship with Spain. He was known to be industrious and diligent, and his memory was highly regarded by his contemporaries.

In the introduction to *The Art of Rhetoric*, Wilson wrote,

Neither can I see that men could have been brought by any other means to live together in fellowship of life, to maintain Cities, to deal truly, and willingly obey one another, if men at the first had not by art and eloquence persuaded [them of] that which they full oft found out by reason. (Wilson, *The Art of Rhetoric*, p. 42, spelling modernized)

He understood that his many vocations all relied on his ability to persuade others of the truth. We want our students to engage with the world, but Wilson reminds us that one cannot lead without the ability to persuade others to follow.

I think of what Paul said in Romans 8:38–39, explaining the early Christians' willingness to die on behalf of their Lord: “*For I am persuaded*, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (emphasis mine). Paul and his fellow believers were inspired

*Rhetoric is the use of knowledge and understanding to perceive wisdom, pursue virtue, and proclaim truth.*

to do great things because they had been persuaded of the truth. As a parent and a teacher, I hope all of my students will have a passion for persuading others.

My personal goal for this book is, therefore, to persuade you to accept this nobler definition of rhetoric that draws from Aristotle's insights but weighs them in light of biblical teachings: *Rhetoric is*

*the use of knowledge and understanding to perceive wisdom, pursue virtue, and*



*proclaim truth*. I know it sounds complicated, but in the next few sections, I will explain each of these elements in greater detail.

## THE USE OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING...

Rhetoric has to be built on something. You cannot effectively persuade someone of the truth until you know what the truth is. Think about a blender: if you turn it on without first filling it with suitable ingredients, it makes a horrible sound and produces nothing edible. Where do the ingredients come from? The first two stages of learning. If you remember, the grammar stage of classical education teaches your child to acquire lots of knowledge and facts about the world. The dialectic stage teaches your child to assess and order that information so that he begins to understand it. Rhetoric is the culmination of what your student has practiced in the early years of his education.

Modern education encourages students to think that what they learn has no practical application; that each subject exists in isolation, and there is no crossover. A classical education teaches the exact opposite. Everything studied in the grammar stage sees its fruit in the rhetoric stage. Your student will use his knowledge and understanding to develop wisdom. Memorizing the names of the U.S. presidents (grammar) will give him the vocabulary he needs to study the U.S. Constitution and compare it to the Magna Carta (dialectic). Having defined and compared governing documents from different parts of the world, he will be able to make a wise judgment about the meaning of good governance and apply that knowledge to his work or family (rhetoric). The same process applies in any subject. Furthermore, knowledge learned in one subject may find application in a completely different subject! The facts your child learns about math might help him understand a principle in economics or physics. His knowledge of history facts might help him discover truth about a style of fine arts or a foreign language. Translating Caesar's *Gallic Wars* helps students to understand Napoleon better and his goal to create a new Roman Empire. Drawing a line through a scatter plot and determining the slope helps them determine if there are cause and effect relationships between things like the money supply and inflation, GDP growth and unemployment, and corporate

*Everything studied in the grammar stage sees its fruit in the rhetoric stage.*

profitability and stock market returns. Knowledge of the exuberant spirit of the Renaissance helps him understand Michelangelo's *David*.

### ...TO PERCEIVE WISDOM...

When we talk about wisdom, we can look to King Solomon as an example, a man internationally renowned for the wisdom given to him by God. His wisdom extended across today's modern subjects, from music and poetry to science and history:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4:29–31)

*We want our high school students to use their knowledge and understanding... to know God and to make Him known.*

Solomon was a Renaissance man before the term was coined! More importantly, he understood that wisdom comes from God. Wisdom enables us to see connections between ideas and relate all knowledge back to our Creator. As Saint Augustine wrote in *On Christian Doctrine*, "let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master" (book II, chapter 18). We want our high school students to use their knowledge and understanding not for personal gain or fame, but as a way to know God and to make Him known. All our study and practice of rhetoric should have this purpose in mind.

## ...PURSUE VIRTUE...

As our sons have become men, they have learned to live with the consequences of their actions. That is how the world judges them. Their choices also reveal what they truly value. Remember, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). Rhetoric is about words, of course, but it is also about actions. We want our children to act rightly and to persuade others to do the same. One of the great Roman writers on rhetoric, Quintilian, put this idea succinctly when he said, “At any rate let us banish from our hearts the delusion that eloquence, the fairest of all things, can be combined with vice” (*Institutio Oratoria*, volume 4, book 12). An elegant and persuasive speech delivered by a just man moves people to act.

## ...AND PROCLAIM TRUTH...

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

As students enter the rhetoric stage of education, they are on their way to becoming leaders of men. To lead rightly, they must proclaim truth to those around them, whether they are politicians, statesmen, missionaries, business owners, parents, or simply members of a community. Nancy Pearcey makes a similar argument in her book *Saving Leonardo*:

The central challenge of our age, says Catholic philosopher Louis Dupré, is the lack of integrating truth. “We experience our culture as fragmented; we live on bits of meaning and lack the overall vision that holds them together in a whole.” As a result, people feel an intense need for self-integration. Christianity has the power to integrate our lives and create a coherent personality structure—but only if we embrace it as the ultimate, capital-T Truth that pulls together all lesser truths. “Faith cannot simply remain one discrete part of life,” Dupré says. It must “integrate all other aspects of existence.” Anything less is neither beautiful nor compelling enough to ignite our passion or transform our character. (44; quoting from an interview in *The Christian Century*)

As educators, it is our job to give students the confidence, through repeated practice in a variety of subjects over an extended period of time, to proclaim truth no matter what situation they encounter.

*How do I incorporate rhetoric in my child's education?*

I wanted to start out with the big picture so that you will catch the vision of why we would want our sons and daughters to become great rhetoricians. But, I know that parents also want to know how to make this part of their daily schooling. What does it look like to use knowledge and understanding to perceive wisdom in science? What does it mean to use knowledge and understanding to pursue virtue in mathematics? What does it mean to use knowledge and understanding to proclaim truth about history? The rest of this book will go through subject by subject and show you practical ways to implement the study of rhetoric with your student. The rest of this chapter provides you an overview of rhetoric as an art of learning.

We often start our discussion of rhetoric with the Greeks because they were some of the first to systematize the study of it and arrange it in an orderly form. I compare what they did to what some homeschool moms love to do, which is to break big ideas into small, manageable steps—a sort of “Five Ways to Organize Your Homeschool Day”—but with togas instead of denim jumpers, as the stereotype goes. Aristotle, in particular, divided the art of rhetoric into five canons. The word comes from the Greek *kanon*, which refers to a measuring line or standard of excellence. The five canons are invention, arrangement, elocution (style), memory, and delivery. To be excellent rhetoricians, our students should aim for excellence in each of these areas. Here are a few helpful ways to think about each canon:

Canon	Guiding Question	Action
Invention <i>Inventio</i>	What should I say?	Discover ideas, research, and plan.
Arrangement <i>Dispositio</i>	In what order should I say it?	Arrange ideas in a logical and organized manner.

Elocution (Style) <i>Elocutio</i>	How should I say it?	Express ideas in the style that is most persuasive in appealing to the audience.
Memory <i>Memoria</i>	How should memory inform my presentation?	Add memorable features to your essay or speech. Commit ideas to memory.
Delivery <i>Pronuntiatio</i>	How should I present this truth in speech and action?	Deliver ideas in oral or written form.

The five canons give us a form to use when we talk about the art of rhetoric, and you can use them to practice rhetoric with your student. Each subject-specific chapter that follows will be organized around the five canons, so this section simply gives you a preview; each time you cycle back through the canons, you will discover something new about them.

## INVENTION

Before your student begins to speak, write, or create something, he must first identify the truth he wants to present and the audience to whom he will be communicating it. In my last book, *The Question*, I outlined five types of questions your student can ask to help him figure out what to say. He should (1) define terms, (2) compare ideas, (3) ask about the relationship between ideas, (4) consider circumstances, and (5) review any available testimony about the subject. He might practice this canon by conducting research in a library or on the computer; he might gather ideas by talking to a group of people, or he might analyze the logic of an argument. Although he may begin alone, he should always invite others into his process of invention. I named this book about rhetoric *The Conversation* because a conversation is one of the best places for a student to clarify his ideas and learn how to relate them to someone else in a way that is thoughtful and accessible. In *The Office of Assertion*, an approachable book on rhetoric and writing, Scott Crider writes “We tend to assume that our argument is self-evident, either because we ourselves already understand it and simply expect others to, or because

we have not thought enough about it to see that its terms might need to be defined and its ideas elaborated” (19). If you invite the greatest scientist in the world to speak to a five-year-old, you will have wasted your time unless the scientist can tailor his message to the child’s level of understanding. Audience matters. Even essays that only you or one other person will read should be planned from the beginning with an audience in mind.

### ARRANGEMENT

After determining what he wants to say, your student will need to decide in what order he should say it. It may be easiest to understand how arrangement works when your student is writing an essay. After all, modern educators, too, instruct students to create outlines before they begin to write. But, your student also needs to practice arrangement if he is creating a poster for a science fair. After all, he will need to think about the best way to lay out the graphs and information in the space he has been allotted. Likewise, a scientist learns to arrange experiments rightly so that he tests the appropriate variables in the appropriate order. A mathematician arranges a mathematical proof so that it follows a logical sequence, and your math student should do the same. A choreographer arranges a series of dance movements. A graphic designer arranges headlines and images to achieve a desired effect on the viewer.

Audience and purpose should always inform his decisions. As an example, a journalist writing a newspaper article will put the most important ideas at the very top (called an “inverted pyramid” structure) so that fast-moving readers will not miss them. By contrast, a novelist may save a surprising twist for the very end, wanting to keep his readers guessing. Rhetoric is always relational. You can’t persuade a brick wall or a sponge. So, remind your student that no audience wants to be treated like a sponge. A human will rarely absorb everything you say if you ignore his or her needs and experiences.

Studying arrangement in this way allows you to talk about choices and consequences with your student. This train of thought should also lead your student to consider how he arranges his own life. Perhaps he is seeking more independence and wants to take charge of his own schedule for completing his studies. I once gave an 18-year-old seasonal employee keys to a car and a credit card to use for business purposes. As he was moving on to more

permanent employment, he handed the keys back to me and thanked me for trusting him more than anyone he had ever met. He was stunned that a stranger would give him so much responsibility. I was pleased because I noticed he rearranged his whole life to serve our family that year. Actions are as much a part of a conversation as words.

## ELOCUTION / STYLE

The next consideration is the canon of elocution, in which your student asks, “How should I say it?” Should the presentation be spoken or written? Should it be formal or informal? How specialized should the vocabulary be? Students will learn to dress up their writing and speaking with rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, similes, and parallelism, but they must also learn when *not* to use these devices and how to avoid overusing them. Aristotle writes this:

It is appropriate enough for a poet to talk of “white milk,” in prose such epithets are sometimes lacking in appropriateness or, when spread too thickly, plainly reveal the author turning his prose into poetry. Of course we must use some epithets, since they lift our style above the usual level and give it an air of distinction. But we must aim at the due mean, or the result will be worse than if we took no trouble at all; we shall get something actually bad instead of something merely not good. (*Rhetoric* 3.3)

The style of a sermon will differ from the style of a political debate or of a commencement speech. The audience and the subject matter determine the stylistic devices the writer or speaker should employ to move the audience to new thoughts or actions.

Elocution may be as simple as showing compassion for the reader by proofreading an essay or as complex as creating an extended metaphor in a poem or putting a fine glaze on a piece of pottery. The danger for student rhetoricians is that they may mistake ornamentation for appropriateness and neglect clarity. Remind your student to put his audience’s needs ahead of his own desire to show off. At the same time, do not expect perfect elocution right away. Like anything else worth doing, elocution requires practice and

the willingness to do it badly at first. Expect extremes, and then take the time to correct them.

## MEMORY

The fourth canon of rhetoric is memory, which, in ancient times, referred literally to the act of memorizing a speech. Great orators memorized their words so that they could throw their entire bodies into presenting the speech and speak naturally. Contemporary students of rhetoric can think about memory in several different ways. First, when students communicate about a subject, they should draw from memory, making use of what they and the audience already know about the subject. Find common ground with the audience. Whenever possible, lay out the context surrounding your argument or idea.

Second, students should seek to make their communication memorable for their audience. This might mean giving a clear “road map” at the beginning of a speech, telling the audience what key words to look for so that they can remember main points. It might mean limiting a presentation to three main ideas rather than providing seven or ten. It might mean using repetition to drive home an argument. You may notice that in this section I am identifying each aspect of memory by using numbers. This technique makes it clear when I move on to a new point.

Third and finally, students may actually memorize a speech or a presentation if doing so will allow them to focus more on their audience. Non-verbal communication, including eye contact, is extremely important if you are trying to persuade someone that you are trustworthy. Even if your student is not memorizing a speech to present to a large audience, he should “be ready always to give an answer to every man” about the gospel, and that means thinking about his answer, working out the best way to say it, and being prepared to speak it aloud to another person. What is that if not a feat of memory?



## DELIVERY

The final canon of rhetoric is delivery: “How should I present this truth in speech and action?” As your student prepares to engage the world in more ways than ever, with less supervision than ever, you as the parent will have the opportunity to talk to him about the way he presents not only his words but also himself. Is his attire appropriate to his situation, and does it convey respect for the people he will encounter? Does his body language demonstrate confidence, interest, and integrity? I once agreed to allow my Challenge students to celebrate National Pajama Day by wearing pajamas to class. (They used very persuasive arguments to convince me this was a good idea.) Unfortunately, it was also the day they were presenting memorized historical speeches. One of my students delivered a flawlessly memorized rendition of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, complete with booming voice and Southern accent. Unfortunately, he delivered this speech in Cookie Monster pajama pants. His attire made it difficult for the audience to focus on the content and delivery and to be moved.

Encourage high school students to practice public speaking through debate, mock trial, or science fairs, not because all of them will have careers that require public speaking, but because the skills they acquire will serve them well in any situation. And remind them to wear the correct attire!

## PERSUADING THE HEART, MIND, AND SOUL

The five canons of rhetoric provide a form for implementing rhetoric in your student’s education, but we still need to talk about what makes something persuasive. Aristotle used three categories he called *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. Each one appeals to a particular sensibility that we can simplify to mind, heart, and soul.

The Greek word *logos*—think of the word “logical”—is the same one that appears in John chapter one, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” *Logos* (“word”) also means a plea, an opinion, or a reasoned argument. In classical rhetoric, *logos* refers to propositional truth, an argument that appeals to the mind of the listener. Aristotle calls it “persuasion [...] when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by

means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question” (*Rhetoric* 1.2).

*Pathos*—think of the word “pathetic”—refers to an emotional appeal, an appeal to the heart. When we speak of *pathos*, as when we speak of rhetoric, we are referring to an emotional appeal that leads toward truth. There is a marked difference between a story that moves us to rightful compassion or celebration and a story that manipulates the emotions for personal gain. We must be careful not to lump the two together too tightly. Charles Dickens inspired his readers to compassion by appealing to our love for Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*. Harriet Beecher Stowe inspired her readers to speak out against slavery by appealing to an emotional bond with the slaves in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In the Bible, Nathan inspires David to repentance by appealing to his concern for justice.

When an emotional appeal is connected to truth and produces a right response, it can be called *pathos* and is an act of rhetoric. When an emotional appeal is divorced from truth or out of balance with the logic of the appeal, it can constitute emotional manipulation. Dorothy Sayers describes this well in her essay “The Lost Tools of Learning”:

Has it ever struck you as odd, or unfortunate, that today, when the proportion of literacy throughout Western Europe is higher than it has ever been, people should have become susceptible to the influence of advertisement and mass propaganda to an extent hitherto unheard of and unimagined? Do you put this down to the mere mechanical fact that the press and the radio and so on have made propaganda much easier to distribute over a wide area? Or do you sometimes have an uneasy suspicion that the product of modern educational methods is less good than he or she might be at disentangling fact from opinion and the proven from the plausible?

I think of all the products being made today with planned obsolescence or the common practice of sending a sales team to promote a product with guarantees that the service department could never keep. Practicing rhetoric, truth with words, will prepare our students to recognize integrity in daily living.

Finally, *ethos*—think of the word “ethical”—refers to the character or reputation of the rhetorician. *Ethos* appeals to the soul of the man. Aristotle

writes in *Rhetoric*, “It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses” (1.2). Today, although we attempt to determine the character of a speaker by the quality of his speaking, we are often disappointed to find that the smoothest speakers lack a basic ethical compass in their lives, no matter how persuasive their speeches might be. What if a pastor preached a sermon about training up children but his own children were out of control? What if you went to a financial planner who exhorted you to live on a budget while he was personally in debt? Remember our definition of rhetoric: *Rhetoric is the use of knowledge and understanding to perceive wisdom, pursue virtue, and proclaim truth.* As our students pursue virtue to become men and women of character, they will become more persuasive writers, speakers, and leaders, no matter what vocation they pursue.