



The Good Teacher with Christopher Perrin and Carrie Eben

Lecture I: Introduction
and Overview by
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Outline:

In this lesson, Dr. Christopher Perrin explores the central principle of classical education: that the teacher must first and foremost be a good human being—virtuous, loving, and wise—before being a skilled teacher. Drawing on classical and Christian sources, Dr. Perrin unpacks what it means to model virtue, cultivate the soul, and practice the art of teaching not as a rigid science but as a dynamic and cooperative pursuit of wisdom and formation.

"When a student has been fully trained, he will be like his teacher."
— Luke 6:40

The Twofold Goodness of a Teacher

- A good teacher is both morally good (beautiful and virtuous) and practically good (skilled at teaching).
- The Greek phrase *kalos kagathos* encapsulates this: a unity of moral beauty (*kalos*) and practical excellence (*agathos*).

Education as Soul Formation

- The ultimate aim of education is the formation of the human soul, called *humanitas* in Latin.
- Teachers cultivate students toward maturity and virtue, like gardeners tending a tree to bear good fruit.

The Teacher as Model and Mentor

- Historically, students sought out good teachers, not just institutions.
- Education is a deeply personal encounter: students follow the example of their teacher.
- Gregory of Nyssa sought to “have fellowship” with Origen to grow through personal connection and discipleship.

Teaching as an Art, Not a Science



- Teaching cannot be reduced to measurable methods or fixed rules.
- Gilbert Highet, in *The Art of Teaching*, emphasized its dynamic and unpredictable nature.
- Teaching is a cooperative art: students must choose to learn, and teachers must inspire and model.

The Teacher as a Mature Student

- A teacher is fundamentally a learner—an older student who models love for learning.
- The word *student* comes from Latin *studium*—zeal, hunger, affection.
- A non-learning teacher ceases to be a teacher.

The Primacy of Virtue

- Modeling virtue is the “principle of principles” in education.
- Quintilian: The orator is first a “good man speaking well.”
- Jesus: “When the student is fully trained, he will be like his teacher.”

Leading Souls: The Deep Anthropology of Teaching

- Classical education seeks to lead not only children (*paideia*) but souls (*psychagōgia*).
Our pedagogy is shaped by our anthropology: what we believe a human being is.
- James K. A. Smith: “Every pedagogy assumes an anthropology.”

Virtue as Excellence in Being Human

- *Virtus* (from *vir*, man) denotes human excellence—doing what humans are meant to do, with skill and beauty.
- This includes physical, moral, civic, and academic virtues.

The Cardinal and Intellectual Virtues

- Four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, courage.
- Academic virtues: wonder, zeal, humility, diligence, attentiveness, responsibility.
- Each virtue supports formation in wisdom and lifelong learning.