



Charlotte Mason: A Liberal Education for All with Jason Barney

Lecture 5: The Three Instruments of Education: Introduction

Outline:

Charlotte Mason felt that all educational methods are not available to us because children are persons. We should focus on three core tools of education. These three were the avenues by which parents and teachers could help children grow and develop as they educated themselves.

- **Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life.**
- Charlotte Mason's three instruments of education are the tools that we use as educators to help children use the tools of learning (from Dorothy Sayers).
- What underlies this is the classical principle of self-education. The mind is a living active thing and must grow and develop on its own. Education must occur from within.

Atmosphere of environment

- This is the idea that there's a world of relationships, a whole environment that may influence a child in his educational growth and development (paideia, for atmosphere).
- Education is not just about what is taught, but also what is caught.
- "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to the next." G.K. Chesterton
- Do our schools and home education rooms have a Christian atmosphere pervading them?
- Culture has a powerful shaping influence on us.

Education is a discipline, the discipline of habits.

- Moral excellence, virtue comes by habit (Aristotle).
- Excellence is not an act, but a habit. Virtue becomes the natural thing to do.
- Plato questioned, "Can virtue be taught?" No notable or influential ancient ever answered this question in the negative. The answer to how to do this is through habits.

Education is a life.

- Education should be about living ideas.
- We should have an idea centered curriculum (rather than facts and skills).



- How do we know what we know or come to understand anything that we know (epistemology)?
- The mind is a spiritual organism.
- When we focus on the great books, we focus on ideas rather than facts.
- Facts hang upon ideas. Ideas is a way of holding values and facts together in recovering the world and mind as they are.
- We want to give children ideas that are true, good, and beautiful.