



The New Old Way Conference in Africa with Dr. David Diener

Break Out Session with
Dr. David Diener

Outline:

What is the purpose of education?

- We have to know how to teach children to read and do math.
- We have to look straight forward in order to plow straight ahead.
- The goal of education is typically economic, it is ultimately about money. That is a pretty sad answer.
- Do we hear a lot about cultivating virtue in education?

We ought to hold the cultivation of virtue to be a central goal to education.

- Plato, the father of philosophy of education
 - Plato started thinking about the assumptions and ideas underneath what we do in education.
- What do we mean when we say virtue?
 - Virtue comes from the Latin word virtus.
 - In Greek, virtue is arête. This means excellence.
 - Anything can be virtuous (chair, knife, cow). It is not just moral, it has to do with fulfilling your capacities or abilities according to your purpose.
 - To be virtuous is to be manly, to fulfill our potential as human beings. This involves following Christ and being transformed by the power of the cross.
 - This isn't moralism (trying to make our students do the right things).
- When students leave your school, how can you tell if they have done a good job?
 - Are they good? (Plato)
 - Key question: Is the education that we provide forming people who are good?
- How does math make us good? Why is studying math important?
 - Plato's answers from Book 7, The Republic
 - Arithmetic: It leads us toward truth and the ability to grasp being. Math teaches us that the world is a certain way. We teach young minds the facts of the world with arithmetic.
 - Geometry: It draws the soul toward truth and produces philosophical thought by directing upwards what we now wrong direct downwards. We all understand something that



none of us have ever seen (circle). We can understand there is something greater than the brokenness we see.

- Astronomy: It compels the soul to look upward (Psalm 19:1-2).
- Harmonics/Music: The study of music useful in the search for the beautiful and the true, but pursue for any other purpose it is useless.
- We have to form people who are wise and good.
- Christian education has to do with the making of Christian persons.

Three practical tips to cultivate virtue.

- Virtue is cultivated by following others' examples (heroes and villains).
Teachers are examples for students.
- Virtue is cultivated by developing loves through practice and the formation of habit. We need to create contexts in which students can practice these virtues.
- Virtue is cultivated by direct instruction.