



School Culture: Full Lesson Tour in Community, Virtue, & Education with Lori Jill Keeler

Lesson 15:
Shepherding the
Grammar School
Student's Heart

Outline:

Shepherding the Grammar School Student's Heart

Introduction: Why is teaching so difficult?

- It is difficult because students are in the room, teachers are in the room. Something else is going on in the room beside the mere transfer of information.
- Education is never neutral.
- You are a sinner just like your students.



Shepherding the Grammar Student's Heart: Three things to remember, which will enable you to teach formatively:

- No matter what you are teaching, you are teaching theology. You are teaching about who God is and who students are.
- You are always teaching conflict resolution.
- You are modeling the gospel.

A Theological Learning Place

- **The problem:** When we fail to worship God, we exchange and worship created things instead. Students have idols. We are all idol-making factories (Calvin). **Common idols:** Approval, pride, performance, achievement, affections, pleasure, excitement, possessions.
- **Our calling:** Hold out a vision of the glory and goodness of God: Psalms 145, 4, 16, 96. Only God will satisfy their ultimate search for significance.
- **Implications:** a) Remember you serve students who are hard-wired for worship; b) They are constantly interpreting the world; c) They live out of how they interpret the world. d) The truth of all interpretation should be the being and existence and excellence of God.



- Families are often feeding the idols instead of turning children to Christ; teachers have to be careful not to turn students to idols too, or polish old idols. We can be blind to certain idols in students.

A Sociological Learning Place

- Understanding social conflict biblically
- See the following books:
 - *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp
 - *Give Them Grace* by Elyse Fitzpatrick
 - *The Young Peacemaker* by Corlette Sande.
- See James 4:1-3: Fights and quarrels come from inside the hearts of students. Desires battle and wage wars within our hearts. Students are often not battling another student, but battling their own internal desires.
- “Conflicts are therefore not unwanted interruptions to the business of education; they are a vital part of teaching of valuable lessons.”
- **Two ways to handle conflict:** a) Speak the truth in love; b) Let love cover a multitude of sins. Students should avoid tattling to get other students “in trouble.” Ask: “What did John say when you talked to him first?”
- We must seek to resolve conflicts with reference to the gospel and our need for Christ. “The difference between you and me is that I am a veteran on the battlefield of sin.” “What a blessing that God allowed you to be caught.”

A Redemptive Community

- Give students a picture of the great and grand story of all of human history: the gospel.
- Students will show grace because they have known grace.
 - **Reaping and Sowing Principles Applied in the Classroom** (Galatians 6:7–10)
 - Two means of shepherding the heart in the classroom are formative instruction and corrective discipline.
- **Formative instruction:** The sowing. Discipline is done for students not to them. Sowing and reaping are mercies of God to inhibit sinful behavior and show the path of life. Behavioralism obscures the gospel. Incentives and punishments teach students they can live their lives “just fine” without Christ. Circle of Blessing: Ephesians 6: 1-3.
- How are you pointing your students to Christ? God only disciplines those he loves (Hebrews 12:6). Use Scripture in your conversations with students.
- **Definition** of formative instruction: the process of providing students with **biblical ways of thinking and thought forms that are rooted in the truth of Scripture** (Deut. 6:4-9: while walking along the road. . .).
- The **function** of formative instruction is the foundation of corrective discipline—it forms and shapes students; it is not a single event but a part of classroom life.



- **Necessity:** it is needed now because our culture no longer roots behavior in the gospel.
- **Objective:** to provide responses to behaviors in ways that take into account the gospel, forgiveness, and the empowerment of grace (Prov. 22).
- Formative Instruction should not be confused with correction discipline. “If the only time we instruct our children is when they need discipline, our students won’t listen to that instruction for fear of the discipline.”
- **Corrective discipline:** Consequences that underscore the reality of biblical truths without turning into behavioralism. Behavioralism will just manage students without reference to the gospel and not result in lasting change.

Getting to the Heart of Behavior

- **The heart directs behavior:** Help students understand that all behavior is driven by the heart (James 4) and can’t be understood in isolation.
- The behavior we see in our students is a reflection of the overflow of their hearts (Luke 6:45). Therefore corrected discipline must be directed to the heart.
- The temptation of correction and discipline is to manipulate behavior. This would mean ignoring the attitude of the heart.
- There are serious implications for behavioralism; it involves us in hypocrisy because we don’t turn to the gospel.
- We do not have to go outside of the Bible to understand human motivation.
- **The goal of intervention is always restoration** (Galatians 6:1). “Step outside of yourself and remember you are an instrument in the Redeemer’s hand.” Bring the student gospel encouragement: grace, forgiveness, and mercy for those who turn to Christ.
- You can either be a tool of restoration or a tool of demolition.
- Hebrews 12:11: Discipline may be painful for the moment, but afterward brings a harvest of righteousness. “We should focus on heart change first instead of behavior change.” Deal with the root and not just the fruit of the behavior. Distinguish between “root sins” and “fruit sins.”

Illustrations

- **Obedience issues:** When students don’t obey, how can you apply the gospel to that?
- **Lying and deceit:** What words can you give them to help them see the need for the gospel?
- **Disregard for others:** How can you give them formative instruction to think about regarding others and then corrective discipline when they don’t?
- **Fear of man:** How can you help students to understand the fear of man through the lens of the gospel?
- **Fighting:** How can you help students to discern the presence or their inner desires that give rise to fighting and point them back to the gospel?