



School Culture: Full Lesson Tour in Community, Virtue, & Education with Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lesson 3: Liturgical Learning

Outline:

How do we better form virtue by our practices in classical education?

- Students would read from the Bible and have discussions about gratitude, but they would complain in the hallway.
- Teaching was reinforcing a deadly separation between discussion and practice.
- Liturgies most directly aim at forming virtue in students.

What are the ingredients of liturgies that lead to virtue in classrooms?

- There are certain forms and ingredients pulled from scriptural practices and nature that those before us have developed.
- According to the students in Jenny Rallens class, it is not what we teach, but how: the way we read, the way teachers talked, the decorations in the room, and the way the furniture was arranged.
 - The students wrote about the habitual, communal, and experiential practices that James K.A. Smith calls liturgies.

Exclusive focus on worldview truth can leave with judgmental cynicism

- Analyzing worldview truth had outweighed loving beauty or living out goodness for this student.
- The affections that were formed were judging and being right.
- Truth can be taught in a way that is true or false.
- The way we teach truth affects the way students will love it and live it.
- We want lives and loves to be shaped by what happens in our classroom.

How do we go from daily lessons to the student who loves truth, goodness, and beauty?

- It is not content of curriculum, but the form of pedagogy that is the difference between these two graduates:
 - The most important thing is what you think and the grade you get.
 - The heart that is touched by experiencing beauty and goodness.



- C.S. Lewis provides a metaphor for knowing God through different ways of knowing the Atlantic Ocean:
 - Encyclopedic knowledge is one way to know the ocean.
 - You would not really know it until you have been there and felt it. There is a certain type of knowing that needs the emotional experience.
- In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis says that virtue is the result of having emotions that are trained by habit.

Liturgy

- To train affections, we have to teach with experiences as well as explanations.
- The way we learn something is more influential than the thing that we learn.
- The form of a lesson teaches as much as the content.
- The way to a person's heart is through the body.
- Liturgy is one of the best pedagogical tools for forming virtue in our students.

Teaching Shakespeare → forming virtue

- Great literature is supposed to transform and change us.
- Simply teaching facts and reading abridged forms of the play is not going to yield the fruit of transformation.
- Studying Shakespeare in an embodied way formed virtue in students.
- The experiential liturgy of producing the plays was the ingredient to actually having impact of forming virtue in the students' lives.

How can I use practices to form other virtues in students?

- Truth is poetic. Virtue is following the example of Jesus rather than a list of rules.
- Answers to moral questions can be given with a story.
- Stories can be referenced instead of a list of rules.
- While liturgy forms virtue, it is not quite that straight forward.

Models for checking ingredients to discern if they would be best for forming virtue

- Medieval liturgy for forming virtue is described through a metaphor of making honey.
- Making honey – 3 stages of learning
 - Bee gathers nectar – Read the text and collect nectar.
 - Bee digests nectar – Pray, discuss, commonplace, and meditate on the text.
 - Honey is produced – Make honey by living the virtues, and by composing works of his own that wove what was read.



- Three stages of honey making as metaphor for three stages of medieval reading and academics.
 - **Lectio** – The book was read and collected from.
 - **Meditatio** – The book was digested, discussed, and deeply studied.
 - **Compositio** – The book became second nature and inspired further works.
 - These are part of **Lectio Divina**, from early Hebrew traditions of reading the Old Testament.
 - Another four part version of Lectio Divina includes: to gaze, to consider, to contemplate, and to imitate. In the Medieval world contemplation was active and about becoming something.
- Eating – Eucharistic liturgy
 - Lectio: Eat
 - Meditatio: Digest
 - Compositio: Grow
- Worship/academic liturgy infiltrated every educational academic practice and all forms of devotion. Bees and honey show up in margins of medieval manuscripts showing how commonly these pictures were imagined as ways of learning and growing in virtue.
- This model was designed to produce virtue in the classroom and the chapel.
- This is a good starting place for answering the following questions:
 - What are the ingredients of liturgies that lead to virtues?
 - What are forms that we can adopt for designing in our classroom liturgies that lead to virtue?

Liturgy of 5th Grade Literature

- Lord of the Rings is a good book for forming virtue, but the liturgies formed it more.
 - **Lectio**
 - When worksheet liturgy is to answer questions and take a test, it says that education is about finding facts, regurgitating facts, getting a 98%, and moving on.
 - Practices can contradict virtue formation.
 - A better liturgy was to commonplace and to work through nectar gathering. This liturgy says that books are to be wondered and marveled at.
 - This prepares students for Meditatio stage.
 - **Meditatio**
 - Creative projects lead to understanding that the fruit of education is not regurgitation but creation.
 - Tons of time was spent in discussion.



- In these conversations students absorb and love what we study, and it prepares them for composition.
- **Compositio**
 - Virtue becomes something that students live in their lives.
 - Celebrate the communal aspect that was studied in Lord of the Rings. A breakfast was planned for the students to come as a character with a toast for another character and an object. Students also took their favorite passage and did dramatic reading, recitation, or song.

Liturgy of 8th Grade Humanities

- Understanding and love do not come from factual regurgitation.
- Instead of sending the class home with reading a passage from Augustine, the class was divided into pairs and followed Lectio, Meditatio, Compositio.
 - **Lectio**
 - The class was divided class into pairs and given two periods to read one paragraph per pair.
 - The students read deeply, took copious notes, drew illustrations, and talked together.
 - Approaching the Lectio stage aiming towards meditation, contemplation, and virtue completely changed the student's experience.
 - **Meditatio**
 - The students planned a lesson to teach the rest of the class based on what they had learned from Augustine about memory.
 - They articulated and used practices engaging the senses as they taught the class.
 - **Compositio**
 - The students applied principles to their own life in being purposeful in remembering things (which is part of our knowledge of God - to cherish our own memory).
 - The students decided that they wanted to rewrite grammar school memory programs to be in line with Augustine and what they experienced.
- The difference between forcing facts and forming virtue is taking the time to slow down and to follow this liturgy.

Liturgy of a Lesson, Honey Making in the Flow of the Day

- The liturgy of a lesson about Augustine, will not bear fruit unless it is situated into a day that is intentionally liturgical.
- 5th grade daily liturgies



- A time of thankfulness forms the virtue of the feeling of gratitude.
- Public confessions for students and teacher is the single most transformative thing in a class, which melds a class together.
 - The goal of a teacher is to form virtue in students.
 - Students can't learn math if they are thinking about a fight with a student across the room from them.
- Sing the Doxology with hands raised.
- Bless the students as they leave in saying, "The Lord be with you."
- Have a silent prayer at beginning of class and conclude before lunch with a liturgy, where the class lights candles and turns down the lights and the students collect, connect, and create.
 - **Collect** – Students reflect on one thing they want to remember from the day (factual or beautiful).
 - **Connect** – Students connect something they learned that day with what they learned in the past week.
 - **Create** – Students write a prayer, poem, or draw a picture of something they learn to what you want to live out.
 - This liturgy has provoked overwhelming gratitude for quiet, music, and time of reflection.
- Students really love learning when they took time to understand it and how it is meaningful to their lives. Students often feel like they can't keep up or feel like they are not smart enough or will not be socially accepted if they fall behind.
- God made students hungry for knowledge of himself, his word, and world. We can give academic equivalent of stone rather than bread, milk, honey, wine, and water.
- God built liturgy into the way the cosmos works. He made our students hungry, and if we feed them they will grow in virtue.
- Paraphrase of a quote by C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, "It is a serious thing to teach in a school of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the most frustrating, rebellious, or boring student in your class may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet if at all only in a nightmare. All day long (by our practices) we are in some degree or another helping our students to one of these destinations. It is with the awe and circumspection proper to them that we should conduct all our dealings with our students – our lectures, recesses, passing periods, lunches, classes, bathroom policies, lesson plans, discussions, discipline moments, grades, classroom décor, and parent teacher-conferences. There are no ordinary students. You have never taught a mere mortal."