



Teaching the Great Books with Josh Gibbs

Lesson 13: How to Test Students

Outline:

What does it mean to test as God tests?

- Conventional tests often fail to reflect real-world challenges or offer meaningful learning experiences.
- Common practices include writing overly easy or hard tests due to laziness or cowardice (i.e. fear of parental complaints.)
- Tests that focus on grades over learning create a transactional relationship with education.
- The concept of grading is relatively new and has evolved over time without settling on a consistent or effective system.
- Principles for Effective Testing
 - **#1 - Praying for Students to Do Well:** This is not the same as praying that they will score well, which can be manipulated by the teacher.
 - **#2 - Testing as a Learning Experience:** Tests should be transformative and instructional, contributing to the student's growth rather than just measuring knowledge.
 - **#3 - Testing as a Gift:** Tests should be seen as a gift, an opportunity for students to learn something new. The student who says, "I'm not a good test-taker," has probably intuited the nature of lousy tests.
 - **#4 - The Test is Part of the School Year:** The teacher should wish students to do well on exam day as during any other time of the year.
 - **#5 - Exam Success is not a Student Scam:** Teachers should view an under-performing student's success on an exam as 11th hour faithfulness, not a scam on the teacher. (This applies to meaningful tests, not regurgitation drills.)
 - **#6 - Incentivizing Memorization Outside of Tests:** Memorization is important, but it should not be the sole focus of tests, nor should tests be the only way to emphasize the importance of the material. Just because a thing is worth knowing, doesn't mean it's worth testing on.



- **#7 - You Cannot Cheat and Pass God's Tests:** Teachers should occasionally strive to write tests that can't be cheated: open book; open note; take it home.
- Create tests that cannot be cheated on by emphasizing self-reflection and personal growth.
- Encourage open-book, open-note, and collaborative tests that mimic real-world problem-solving.
- The goal should be to create assessments that are personalized and deeply engaging, requiring students to apply their learning in meaningful ways.