

THE SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING

John Milton Gregory



UNABRIDGED

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The Seven Laws of Teaching by John M. Gregory, L.L.D.
Ex-Commissioner of the Civil Service of the United States, and
Ex-President of the State University of Illinois

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Foreword

THE AUTHOR

John Milton Gregory was obviously named by parents familiar with and favorable toward the famous poet. Their son greatly emulated their love of letters in his lifetime. He was born in Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, New York, on July 6, 1822. As with most students of the time, he was educated in locally-begun and -controlled schools, but he also excelled in his studies and became a school teacher himself at the ripe age of seventeen. In 1841, he began a pursuit of the law profession by attending Union College of Schenectady, New York. He practiced law for two years and grew disenchanted with it. Being a Christian, perhaps Gregory wanted to do more active Christian service. In any case, he became a Baptist clergyman somewhere in the east. Once again, however, this was not a perfect fit. His ability to teach young people won out, and by 1852 he found himself appointed to the superintendency of a classical school in Detroit, Michigan. (The plot thickens!)

Dr. Gregory's skills in teaching, as well as administration, were noticed by many of his peers, and he also advocated for their interests. He wrote for and was otherwise involved with the State Teachers' Association, as well as being a founding writer of the *Michigan Journal of Education* in 1854. This gained him further recognition, and in 1858 he was elected to

be the state superintendent of public instruction in Michigan, a post few of his caliber would fill. So effective was his work that he was reelected twice more. He approached the work of educating children from a philosophical view, not just methodological. Yet, Dr. Gregory certainly understood the character and frame of children, as is evident in this, his most well-known work.

In 1863 he declined another term as state superintendent, wanting to get closer to the work of the classroom. Therefore, when the opportunity arose in 1864, he accepted the presidency of Kalamazoo College (in Kalamazoo, Michigan) and held that office for three years. The knowledge gained at the higher education level helped Gregory to see the critical nature of university training for students. Many universities and colleges were forming at that time across the United States. In nearby Champaign, Illinois, the Illinois State Industrial University was just being formed, and Dr. Gregory was asked to take the helm in 1867. The challenge of getting the school started well intrigued him, and he laid a solid foundation for the institution that would eventually be known as the University of Illinois. He served there for thirteen years, learning as well as guiding. While there, he also served as the United States commissioner to the World's Fair at Vienna in 1873, the commissioner from the state of Illinois to the Paris Exhibition of 1878, and a member of the board of judges in the educational department of the Centennial Exhibition in

Philadelphia. After leaving the university in 1880, he served on the United States Civil Service Commission for some time.

Dr. Gregory authored a number of books, including *Handbook of History, Map of Time* (1866), *A New Political Economy* (1882), and his masterwork, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, first published in 1884. It was initially written for Sunday school teachers, illustrating his love of teaching and the Word of God. But he always considered his greatest service to be his work at the University of Illinois. So much so that he asked to be buried there. This request was honored after his death in 1898.

THE SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING

Dr. Gregory, a gifted Christian man and teacher, left behind this wonderful text that would serve to benefit many teachers. However, about twenty years after its first publication, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* was “revised” by two professors from the University of Illinois in 1917, during an era of widespread liberal changes in education across the United States. Even though “every effort was made to retain both the form and substance of the original,” according to the revisionists, the changes were very significant and secularizing. Virtually all references to Jesus Christ and the Word of God were expunged, along with many other alterations.

In 1983, unaware of the original work, the Logos School Board (of Moscow, Idaho) adopted *The Seven Laws of Teaching*

for training and evaluating the work of their teachers. We recognized that the brilliant, concise instructions and guidance in this little book were unique in the realm of teacher training materials. For almost twenty years, we used the principles and practices contained in the book to effectively guide our teachers who, in turn, effectively taught their students, according to the truths Dr. Gregory identified and espoused so well. We also had the opportunity, with the growth of classical, Christian education across the United States, to frequently advocate the use of the book for other schools and teachers.

Then, in the summer of 2002, at a national conference of the Association of Classical, Christian Schools (ACCS), we were given a rough copy of the original, out-of-print, 1884 version of *The Seven Laws of Teaching*. Upon just a brief scrutiny, the differences were immediately apparent and amazing! In a way, those of us at Logos felt embarrassment for advocating a poor shade of what was actually a vibrant color, like encouraging the drinking of skim milk without ever knowing what whole milk was like. Needless to say, we were thrilled and humbled at the same time! We were also extremely anxious to get the original book into print again, as Dr. Gregory wrote it, so that many of our peers and even descendants could benefit from it.

HOW *THE SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING* DOVE-TAILS WITH THE CLASSICAL METHODOLOGY

A Consistent, Timeless View of Teaching Dr. Gregory offers us a view of a time when teaching was unabashedly absolutist in its approach. In other words, there really are right and effective ways of doing the seemingly diverse tasks associated with teaching. Like classical instruction, these laws have been with us for some time, just not in a popular or palatable manner. But they both work and work well, when studiously applied. A systematic approach to teaching is only dull and dry if the teacher makes it so. If the hands and mind are motivated by a love of truth, the students and the material, these laws become like the tools of learning, powerful tools for educating the next generation.

Applying the Natural Characteristics of Students Even before Dorothy Sayers wrote her treatise (*The Lost Tools of Learning*) in 1941, Dr. Gregory understood that children grow and change within identifiable levels. Teaching styles, and content to a degree, need to consider the levels to make the most of the instruction time. Dr. Gregory even taught at a classical school. He saw firsthand the advantages of knowing children well—using their experiences, senses, application, planning for the future levels.

Integration/Sequencing of Material As with classical instruction, these seven laws encourage a natural and biblical integration of knowledge and a deeper, vs. just broad,

understanding of a topic. For example, the lesson must connect new to old knowledge, that's sequencing. The classical curriculum must self-consciously repeat and reinforce, sequentially, the important material and concepts. This, of necessity, will lead to doing more with less—another justification for integration.

Standards in Instruction Too often feeling like ships at sea, teachers need a fixed beacon for evaluating the accuracy of their instruction. They need to know that their skills are not assumed, but can be guided, improved, and measured by clear objectives. This is nowhere more true than among the new breed of classical, Christian teachers. The seven laws provide a quantifiable means for both administrators and teachers to measure a teacher's skills and success.

May you find this book to be as exciting in its benefits as we have. Even in its revised version we had never seen a better book on the work of teaching than Dr. Gregory's. Having it now in its original form only makes us more convinced of its usefulness to our work as Christian, classical teachers. May God bless your teaching through your application of *The Seven Laws of Teaching*.

Tom Garfield

SUPERINTENDENT, LOGOS SCHOOL

Introduction

Let us, like the Master, place a little child in our midst.¹ Let us carefully observe this child that we may learn from it what education is; for education, in its broadest meaning, embraces all the steps and processes by which an infant is gradually transformed into a full-grown and intelligent man.

Let us take account of the child as it is. It has a complete human body, with eyes, hands, and feet—all the organs of sense, of action and of locomotion—and yet it lies helpless in its cradle. It laughs, cries, feels, and seems to perceive, remember, and will. It has all the faculties of the human being, but is without power to use them save in a merely animal way.

In what does this infant differ from a man? Simply in being a child. Its body and limbs are small, weak, and without voluntary use. Its feet cannot walk. Its hands have no skill. Its lips cannot speak. Its eyes see without perceiving; its ears hear without understanding. The universe into which it has come lies around it wholly unseen and unknown.

As we more carefully study all this, two chief facts become clear: First, this child is but a germ—it has not its destined growth. Second, it is ignorant—without acquired ideas.

On these two facts rest the two notions of education. (1) The development of powers. (2) The acquisition of knowledge. The first is an unfolding of the faculties of body and mind to

¹Matthew 18:2

full growth and strength; the second is the furnishing of the mind with the knowledge of things—of the facts and truths known to the human intelligence.

Each of these two facts—the child's immaturity and its ignorance—might serve as a basis for a science of education. The first would include a study of the faculties and powers of the human being, their order of development and their laws of growth and action. The second would involve a study of the various branches of knowledge and arts with their relations to the faculties by which they are discovered, developed, and perfected. Each of these sciences would necessarily draw into sight and involve the other; just as a study of powers involves a knowledge of their products, and as a study of effects includes a survey of causes.

Corresponding to these two forms of educational science, we find two branches of the art of education. The one is the art of *training*; the other the art of *teaching*. Training is the systematic development and cultivation of the powers of mind and body. Teaching is the systematic inculcation of knowledge.

As the child is immature in all its powers, it is the first business of education, as an art, to cultivate those powers, by giving to each power regular exercise in its own proper sphere, till, through exercise and growth, they come to their full strength and skill. This training may be physical, mental, or moral, according to the powers trained, or the field of their application.

As the child is ignorant, it is equally the business of

education to communicate knowledge. This is properly the work of teaching. But as it is not expected that the child shall acquire at school all the knowledge he will need, nor that he will cease to learn when school instruction ceases, the first object of teaching is to communicate such knowledge as may be useful in gaining other knowledge, to stimulate in the pupil the love of learning, and to form in him the habits of independent study.

These two, the cultivation of the powers and the communication of knowledge, together make up the teacher's work. All organizing and governing are subsidiary to this twofold aim. The result to be sought is a full-grown physical, intellectual, and moral manhood, with such intelligence as is necessary to make life useful and happy, and as will fit the soul to go on learning from all the scenes of life and from all the available sources of knowledge.

These two great branches of educational art—training and teaching—though separable in thought, are not separable in practice. We can only train by teaching, and we teach best when we train best. Training implies the exercise of the powers to be trained; but the proper exercise of the intellectual powers is found in the acquisition, the elaboration, and the application of knowledge.

There is, however, a practical advantage in keeping these two processes of education distinct before the mind. The teacher with these clearly in view will watch more easily and

estimate more intelligently the real progress of his pupils. He will not, on the one side, be content with a dry daily drill which keeps his pupils at work as in a treadmill, without any sound and substantial advance in knowledge; nor will he, on the other side, be satisfied with cramming the memory with useless facts or empty names, without any increase of the powers of thought and understanding. He will carefully note both sides of his pupils' education—the increase of power and the advance in knowledge—and will direct his labors and select the lessons with a wise and skillful adaptation to secure both of the ends in view.

This statement of the two sides of the science and art of education brings us to the point of view from which may be clearly seen the real aim of this little volume. That aim is stated in its title—*The Seven Laws of Teaching*. Its object is to set forth, in a certain systematic order, the principles of the art of teaching. Incidentally it brings into view the mental faculties and their order of growth. But it deals with these only as they need to be considered in a clear discussion of the work of acquiring knowledge.

As the most obvious work of the schoolroom is that of learning lessons from the various branches of knowledge, so the work of teaching—the work of assigning, explaining, and hearing these lessons—is that which chiefly occupies the time and attention of the schoolmaster or instructor. To explain the laws of teaching will, therefore, seem the most direct and

practical way to instruct teachers in their art. It presents at once the clearest and most practical view of their duties, and of the methods by which they may win success in their work. Having learned the laws of teaching, the teacher will easily master the philosophy of training.

The author does not claim to have expounded the whole Science of Education, nor to have set forth even the whole Art of Teaching. This would require a systematic study of each mental faculty, and of the relation of each to every branch of knowledge, both of sciences and arts. But if he has succeeded in grouping around the Seven Factors, which are present in every act of true teaching, the leading principles and rules of the teaching art, so that they can be seen in their natural order and connections, and can be methodically learned and used, he has done what he wished to do. He leaves his offering on the altar of service to God and his fellow men.

I

THE LAWS OF TEACHING

1. Teaching has its natural laws as fixed as the laws of circling planets or of growing organisms. Teaching is a process in which definite forces are employed to produce definite effects, and these effects follow their causes as regularly and certainly as the day follows the sun. What the teacher does, he does through natural agencies working out their natural effects. Causation is as certain, if not always as clear, in the movements of mind as in the motions of matter. The mind has its laws of thought, feeling, and volition, and these laws are none the less fixed that they are spiritual rather than material.

2. To discover the laws of any process, whether mental or material, makes it possible to bring that process under the control of him who knows the law and can command the conditions. He who has learned the laws of the electric

currents may send messages through the ocean; and he who has mastered the chemistry of the sunbeam may make it paint him portraits and landscapes. So he that masters the laws of teaching may send knowledge into the depths of the soul, and may impress upon the mind the images of immortal truth. He who would gain harvests must obey nature's laws for the growing corn; and he who would teach a child successfully must follow the laws of teaching, which are also laws of the mental nature. Nowhere, in the world of mind or in the world of matter, can man produce any effects except as he employs the means on which those effects depend. He is powerless to command nature's forces except as, by design or by chance, he obeys nature's laws.

WHAT IS TEACHING?

3. Teaching, in its simplest sense, is the communication of knowledge. This knowledge may be a fact, a truth, a doctrine of religion, a precept of morals, a story of life, or the processes of an art. It may be taught by the use of words, by signs, by objects, by actions, or examples; and the teaching may have for its object instruction or impression—the training of mind, the increase of intelligence, the implantation of principles, or the formation of character; but whatever the substance, the mode, or the aim of the teaching, the act itself, fundamentally considered, is always substantially the same: it is a communication of knowledge. It is the painting in

another's mind the mental picture in one's own—the shaping of a pupil's thought and understanding to the comprehension of some truth which the teacher knows and wishes to communicate. Further on we shall see that the word communication is used here, not in the sense of the transmission of a mental something from one person to another, but rather in the sense of helping another to reproduce the same knowledge, and thus to make it common to the two.

THE SEVEN FACTORS

4. To discover the law of any phenomenon, we must subject that phenomenon to a scientific analysis and study its separate parts. If any complete act of teaching be so analyzed, it will be found to contain seven distinct elements or factors: (1) two actors—a teacher and a learner; (2) two mental factors—a common language or medium of communication, and a lesson or truth to be communicated; and (3) three functional acts or processes—that of the teacher, that of the learner, and a final or finishing process to test and fix the result.

5. These are essential parts of every full and complete act of teaching. Whether the lesson be a single fact told in three minutes or a lecture occupying as many hours, the seven factors are all there, if the work is entire. None of them can be omitted, and no other need be added. No full account of the philosophy of teaching can be given which does not include them all, and if there is any true science of teaching, it must lie

in the laws and relations of these seven elements and facts. No true or successful art of teaching can be found or contrived which is not based upon these factors and their laws.

6. To discover their laws, let these seven factors be passed again in careful review and enumeration, as follows: (1) a teacher; (2) a learner; (3) a common language or medium of communication; (4) a lesson or truth; (5) the teacher's work; (6) the learner's work; (7) the review work, which ascertains, perfects, and fastens the work done. Is it not obvious that each of these seven must have its own distinct characteristic, which makes it what it is? Each stands distinguished from the others, and from all others, by this essential characteristic, and each enters and plays its part in the scene by virtue of its own character and function. Each is a distinct entity or fact of nature. And as every fact of nature is the product and proof of some law of nature, so each element here described has its own great law of function or action, and these taken together constitute *The SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING*.

7. It may seem trivial to so insist upon all this. Some will say: "Of course there can be no teaching without a teacher and a pupil, without a language and a lesson, and without the teacher teaches and the learner learns; or, finally, without a proper review, if any assurance is to be gained that the work has been successful and the result is to be made permanent. All this is too obvious to need assertion." So also is it obvious that when seeds, soil, heat, light, and moisture come together in proper measure,

plants are produced and grow to the harvest; but the simplicity of these common facts does not prevent their hiding among them some of the profoundest and most mysterious laws of nature. So, too, a simple act of teaching hides within it some of the most potent and significant laws of mental life and action.

THE LAWS STATED

8. These laws are not obscure and hard to reach. They are so simple and natural that they suggest themselves almost spontaneously to anyone who carefully notes the facts. They lie imbedded in the simplest description that can be given of the seven elements named, as in the following:

- (1) A *teacher* must be one who *knows* the lesson or truth to be taught.
- (2) A *learner* is one who *attends* with interest to the lesson given.
- (3) The *language* used as a *medium* between teacher and learner must be common to both.
- (4) The *lesson* to be learned must be explicable in the terms of truth already known by the learner—the *unknown* must be explained by the known.
- (5) *Teaching* is *arousing* and *using* the *pupil's mind* to form in it a desired conception or thought.
- (6) *Learning* is *thinking* into one's own *understanding* a new idea or truth.
- (7) The *test and proof* of teaching done—the finishing and

fastening process—must be a *re-viewing*, *re-thinking*, *re-knowing*, and *re-producing* of the knowledge taught.

THE LAWS STATED AS RULES

9. These definitions and statements are so simple and obvious as to need no argument or proof; but their force as fundamental laws may be more clearly seen if stated as rules for teaching. Addressed to the teacher, they may read as follows:

I. Know thoroughly and familiarly the lesson you wish to teach; or, in other words, teach from a full mind and a clear understanding.

II. Gain and keep the attention and interest of the pupils upon the lesson. Refuse to teach without attention.

III. Use words understood by both teacher and pupil in the same sense—language clear and vivid alike to both.

IV. Begin with what is already well known to the pupil in the lesson or upon the subject, and proceed to the unknown by single, easy, and natural steps, letting the known explain the unknown.

V. Use the pupil's own mind, exciting his self-activities. Keep his thoughts as much as possible ahead of your expression, making him a discoverer of truth.

VI. Require the pupil to reproduce in thought the lesson he is learning—thinking it out in its parts, proofs, connections, and applications till he can express it in his own language.

VII. Review, *review, review*, reproducing correctly the old, deepening its impression with new thought, correcting false views, and completing the true.

ESSENTIALS OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHING

10. These rules, and the laws which they outline and presuppose, underlie and govern all successful teaching. If taken in their broadest meaning, nothing need be added to them; nothing can be safely taken away. No one who will thoroughly master and use them need fail as a teacher, provided he will also maintain the good order which is necessary to give them free and undisturbed action. Disorder, noise, and confusion may hinder and prevent the results desired, just as the constant disturbance of some chemical elements forbids the formation of the compounds which the laws of chemistry would otherwise produce. Good order is a condition precedent to good teaching.

11. Like all the great laws of nature, these laws of teaching will seem at first simple facts, so obvious as scarcely to require such formal statement, and so plain that no explanation can make clearer their meaning. But, like all fundamental truths, their simplicity is more apparent than real. Each law varies in applications and effects with varying minds and persons, though remaining constant in itself; and each stands related to other laws and facts, in long and wide successions, till it reaches the outermost limits of the science of teaching.

Indeed, in a careful study of these seven laws, to which we shall proceed in coming chapters, the discussion will reach every valuable principle in education, and every practical rule which can be of use in the teacher's work.

12. They cover all teaching of all subjects and in all grades, since they are the fundamental conditions on which ideas may be made to pass from one mind to another, or on which the unknown can become known. They are as valid and useful for the college professor as for the master of a common school; for the teaching of a Bible truth as for instruction in arithmetic. In proportion as the truth to be communicated is high and difficult to be understood, or as the pupils to be instructed are young and ignorant, ought they to be carefully followed.

13. Doubtless there are many successful teachers who never heard of these laws, and who do not consciously follow them; just as there are people who walk safely without any theoretical knowledge of gravitation, and talk intelligibly without studying grammar. Like the musician who plays by ear, and without knowledge of notes, these "natural teachers," as they are called, have learned the laws of teaching from practice, and obey them from habit. It is none the less true that their success comes from obeying law, and not in spite of laws. They catch by intuition the secret of success, and do by a sort of instinct what others do by rule and reflection. A careful study of their methods would show how closely they follow these principles; and if there is any exception it is in the cases in

which their wonderful practical mastery of some of the rules—usually the first three—allows them to give slighter heed to the others. To those who do not belong to this class of “natural teachers,” the knowledge of these laws is of vital necessity.

SKILL AND ENTHUSIASM

14. Let no one fear that a study of the laws of teaching will tend to substitute a cold, mechanical sort of work for the warm-hearted, enthusiastic teaching so often admired and praised. True skill kindles and keeps alive enthusiasm by giving it success where it would otherwise be discouraged by defeat. The true worker's love for his work grows with his ability to do it well. Even enthusiasm will accomplish more when guided by intelligence and armed with skill, while the many who lack the rare gift of an enthusiastic nature must work by rule and skill or fail altogether.

15. Unreflecting superintendents and school boards often prefer enthusiastic teachers to those who are simply well educated or experienced. They count, not untruly, that enthusiasm will accomplish more with poor learning and little skill than the best trained and most erudite teacher who has no heart in his work, and who goes through his task without zeal for progress and without care for results. But why choose either the ignorant enthusiast or the educated sluggard? Enthusiasm is not confined to the unskilled and the ignorant, nor are all calm, cool men idlers. Conscience and the strong

sense of right and duty often exist where the glow of enthusiasm is unknown or has passed away. And there is an enthusiasm born of skill—a joy in doing what one can do well—that is far more effective, where art is involved, than the enthusiasm born of vivid feeling. The steady advance of veterans is far more powerful than the mad rush of raw recruits. The world's best work, in the schools as in the shops, is done by the calm, steady, persistent efforts of skilled workmen who know how to keep their tools sharp, and to make every effort reach its mark. No teacher perhaps ever excelled Pestalozzi¹ in enthusiasm, and few have ever personally done poorer work.

16. But the most serious objection to systematic teaching, based on the laws of teaching, comes from Sunday-school men, pastors and others, who assume that the principal aim of the Sunday school is to impress and convert rather than to instruct; and that skilful teaching, if desirable at all, is much less important than warm appeals to the feelings and earnest exhortations to the conscience. No one denies the value of such appeals and exhortations, nor the duty of teachers, in both day schools and Sunday schools, to make them on all fit opportunities. But what is to be the basis of the Sunday teacher's appeals, if not the truths of Scripture? What religious exhortation will come home with such abiding power as that which

¹ Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich (1746-1827), was a significant Swiss educational reformer, whose theories laid the foundation for much of modern elementary education.

enters the mind with some clear Bible truth, some unmistakable “Thus saith the Lord,” in its front? What preacher wins more souls than Moody with his open Bible ever in hand? What better rule for teacher or pupil than the Master’s “Search the Scriptures?”² What finer example than that of Paul who “reasoned” with both prejudiced Jews and caviling Greeks “out of the Scriptures?”³ If the choice must be between the warm-hearted teacher who simply gushes appeals, and the cold-hearted who stifles all feeling by his icy indifference, give me the former by all odds; but why either? Is there no healthful mean between steam and ice for the water of life? Will the teacher whose own mind glows with the splendid light of divine truths, and who skillfully leads his pupils to a clear vision of the same truths, fail in inspirational power? Is not the divine truth itself—the very Word of God—to be credited with any power to arouse the conscience and convert the soul?

17. These questions may be left to call forth their own inevitable answers. They will have met their full purpose if they repel this disposition to discredit the need of true teaching-work, in Sunday-schools as well as in common schools; and if they convince Sunday school leaders that the great natural laws of teaching are God’s own laws of mind, which must be followed as faithfully in learning His Word as in studying His works.

²John 5:39 ³Acts 17:2

A WORD TO TEACHERS

18. Leaving to other chapters the full discussion of the meaning and philosophy of these seven laws, we only add here the exhortation to the teacher, and especially to the Sunday school teacher, to give them the most serious attention. Sitting before your class of veiled immortals, how often have you craved the power to look into the depths of those young souls, and to plant there with sure hand some truth of science or some grand and life-giving belief of the gospel? How often have you tried your utmost, by all the methods you could devise, to direct their minds to the deep truths and facts of the Bible lesson, and turned away, almost in despair, to find how powerless you were to command the mental movement and to secure the spiritual result? No key will ever open to you the doors of those chambers in which live your pupils' souls; no glass will ever enable you to penetrate their mysterious gloom. But in the great laws of your common nature lie the electric lines by which you may send into each little mind the thought fresh from your own, and awaken the young heart to receive and embrace it. He who made us all of kindred nature settled the spiritual laws by which our minds must communicate, and made possible that art of arts which passes thought and truth from soul to soul.

19. *Remark.* In the discussion of these laws there will necessarily occur some seeming repetitions. They are like

seven hilltops of different height scattered over a common territory. As we climb each in succession, many points in the landscapes seen from their summits will be found included in different views, but it will be always in a new light and with a fresh horizon. The truth that is common to two or more of these laws will be found a mere repetition. New groupings will show new relations and bring to light for the careful student new aspects and uses. The repetitions themselves will not be useless, as they will serve to emphasize the most important features of the art of teaching, and will impress upon the younger teachers those principles which demand the most frequent attention.

II

THE LAW OF THE TEACHER

1. The universal reign of law is the central truth of modern science. No force in man or nature but works under the control of law; no effect in mind or matter but is produced in conformity with law. The simplest notion of natural law is that nature remains forever uniform in its forces and operations. Causes compel their effects, and effects obey their causes, by irresistible laws. Things are what they are by reason of the laws of their being, and to learn the law of any fact is to learn the deepest truth we can know about it. This uniformity of nature is the basis of all science and of all practical art. In mind and in matter the reign of unvarying laws is the primal condition of any true science. The mind, indeed, has its freedoms, but among these there is found no liberty to produce effects contrary to laws. The teacher is therefore as

much the subject of law as the star that shines or the ship that sails. Many qualifications are easily recognized as important to the teacher's position and work; and if all the requirements popularly sought for could be obtained, the teacher would be a model man or woman; perfect in manners, pure in morals, unerring in wisdom, just in judgment, loving in temper, firm in will, tireless in work, conscientious in word and deed, a genius in learning, an angel in charity, an incarnate assemblage of impossible excellencies. Certainly, good character and rare moral qualities are desirable in an instructor of the young, if not for his actual work, at least to prevent harm from his example; but if, one by one, we dismiss from our catalogue of needful qualifications for the work of teaching those not absolutely indispensable, we shall find ourselves obliged to retain at last, as necessary to the very notion of teaching, a knowledge of the branches to be taught. The Law of the Teacher, then—the law which limits and describes him—is this:

The teacher must know that which he would teach.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE LAW

2. It seems too simple for proof that one can not teach without knowledge. How can something come out of nothing, or how can darkness give light? To affirm this law seems like declaring a truism; but deeper study shows it to be a fundamental truth—the very law of the teacher's action and being as a teacher. No other characteristic or qualification is

What a blessing to have this unabridged edition of *The Seven Laws of Teaching* available! In a day when so many educators (and sadly, even some education reformers) live and die by their methods, it is wonderful to have this wisdom from the nineteenth century, a wisdom that reminds us that we need to understand the underlying principles if we are to employ *any* methods fruitfully. This edition is a blessing in another regard as well. Christian educators know that principles do not support themselves; they are not suspended in mid-air somehow. All true wisdom is grounded in the nature of God, and it is no different here. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. This version of *The Seven Laws of Teaching* restores the theological and Christian foundation for this magnificent house.

—DOUG WILSON Author, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*



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