

### Section 3 VIDEO Pattern for Learning

And now I'd like to unfold the simple pattern for learning I mentioned in the introduction.

We are a very academically-minded culture. Our schools are focused on training the minds of our children. You know when you are in the realm of the mind because it can be tested and measured. The buzz words are critical thinking skills and scientific reasoning. Minds are fed with facts and information, words, that can conveniently be organized into grade level curriculum and tested, providing measurable outcomes demanded by those who hand out the money to the schools.

The mind functions in the realm of Science, which is, in essence, all about discovering the laws, rules and principles upon which everything in the world and universe operates. And so we teach our children the rules of math, the rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling. We teach them the laws of physics, the laws of thermodynamics and the laws of economics.

The words 'law' and 'order' go together. Complying with rules creates order. If you've ever traveled to a foreign country where there are no traffic laws, you know how chaotic and dangerous it is to drive. On the other hand, scientists who gave out into the universe are struck with awe at the perfect order, harmony and majesty of galaxies and stars and planets all abiding the laws within their respective spheres.

There are also principles and laws by which civilizations prosper and flourish; our liberty is in law; even happiness is governed by law.

Law is a good thing.

Which is why it puzzles me when I've heard of students asking their teachers why they have to learn all the rules and the teacher responds, "You have to learn the rules so you can break them." Throwing out all the rules seems to be the hallmark of our generation. Just do whatever feels good. We have millions of little girls singing, "No right or wrong, no rules for me, I'm free. Let it go." For a system that prides itself on reason and logic, spending all this time learning rules so we can break them is, in the word of Mr. Spock, illogical."

But I digress.

This type of learning is systematic and sequential. You have to learn the rules of arithmetic before you can master the rules of algebra.

Facts and information are very hard to hold on to and most go into short-term memory. Much of the time in school is spent trying to get information to stick. A child may hold on to facts long enough to take the test, but then they tend to wash away. We use words like cold and hard to describe facts.

And we use a word for the type of learning that goes on in school. We call it academic learning.

Have you ever looked up the definition of ‘academic’? This is what I found in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary: having no practical importance; not involving or relating to anything real or practical; having no practical or useful significance.

And as if that’s not bad enough, we don’t just want academics. We want rigorous academics. Rigorous and rigor-mortis have the same root word—rigor, which means stiffness and rigidity; even voluntary submission to pain. We use painful words like drilling facts into kids.

And we want to extend the academic year and start academics at younger and younger ages?

Remember what Aristotle said over 2000 years ago? “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” Plato also understood: “All learning is based in emotion.” The heart is what pumps life into the brain. A person is still alive as long as the heart is still pumping, even if brain waves have ceased. But a brain cannot function without the heart.

Yet, here we are, cutting the heart out of education. The heart is fed with feelings, impressions, and images which are delivered by the Arts, which include music, pictures, poetry and story. The heart is the realm of the Imagination.

This stage of learning is all about desire; of warming and opening the heart. As Dr. Rich Melheim writes: “The brain is filled with gatekeepers designed to keep information out... you have to open the kid before you open the book” These gatekeepers respond to pleasurable experiences, which the Arts provide. When you ‘get to the emotional centers, the gates of intellect fly open wide.”

Learning in this stage can be random and spontaneous because impressions made on the heart go into long-term memory and are held onto long enough to connect and interlace with other impressions. If a fact can be connected to something the heart cares about, it places the fact in long-term storage.

Cutting out the heart is not good. Studies reveal emotional well-being of college students is at the lowest level in 25 years. Over half of college students in one particular study reported severe feelings of hopelessness and despair. Half! And in the job market, as one employer put it, they’re getting lots of resumes from hopeful engineers, but what they’re looking for and not finding are engineers with personality.

These are symptoms of heart problems arising from our neglect of the heart.

The final part of this pattern of learning is not allowed in our schools: Spirit. I was reading an old 1900 Chemistry textbook and it talked about the elements the Ancients identified: air, water, earth, fire and the fifth was an element they could sense was there, but couldn’t quite put their finger on it. It was a spiritual element and they called it ether. In the spirit of scientific inquiry that tests and measures only that which you can see and handle, the fifth element was dropped,

yet we still hold on to the word 'ether' in the word 'ethereal' which describes something heavenly or celestial, something of another dimension. Something higher than us.

This Spirit is like a Spiritual Sunshine to us. It is inspiration—to be inspired means to take 'in spirit'.

It requires our Faith to believe in its existence because you have to believe in something you cannot handle or measure. It is the same evidential demands of scientific inquiry that keeps talk of the spiritual out of our schools. I can't see the wind, either, or hold it in my hands, but I can see it moving the leaves on the trees and can feel it blowing on my face. If we have not felt it ourselves, we can still see the Spirit's effect in the lives of others. We recognize its presence by its fruits: Joy, Peace, Love, Kindness, Gentleness.

This Spirit or Light is a creative force. It tends to lift, expand and multiply, and everything created under the influence of the spirit yields joy, peace and love. It is the spirit that gives understanding to our learning. The architect who loves the beautiful and learns the skills of building, under the influence of the Spirit will create structures that are not only functional but which inspire the heart with beauty as well. The businessman who loves fairness and people and who learns the rules of success, under the influence of the Spirit will create businesses that will bless and bring joy to many lives. Michelangelo, whose heart loved the beautiful and who mastered the skills of painting and sculpture, wrote, "My unassisted heart is barren clay." He knew the source of his inspiration and genius.

But the spirit cannot create something from nothing. Rather it organizes the raw materials we gather through our learning and turns them into a usefulness. The more we give the Spirit to work with, the more it can accomplish through us.

This is the right-useness of learning. The purest stream, if there is no outlet, will eventually stagnate and stink. The purest knowledge and desires, with no outlet, with no right-useness of them, will eventually rot. Just like our friend Paracelsus learned in the Sandcastles talk I share in

this section.

This stage of learning is very purposeful and customized to the calling and mission of the individual. And the learning is everlasting and eternal. This is the True Education described by Charlotte Mason, between the child's soul and God.

I now find this pattern all over the place.

Both the Old and New Testaments are front end loaded with stories to warm and open hearts. Most of the stories we're familiar with are in the book of Genesis and the Four Gospels. Then come the laws, commandments and doctrines. Finally, the back end has books that require much preparatory learning. The true meaning of books like Isaiah and Revelation can only be revealed spirit to spirit.

John the Baptist's role was to warm and open the hearts of the people so they would be prepared to receive Jesus who taught the law of the gospel in preparation for receiving the Holy Ghost, whose role is to 'teach us all things which we should do.'

I also notice the first commandment is to love, not to obey. Obedience is second. The desire for the good and the beautiful along with obedience to correct principles will create not only heaven on earth, but heaven in the world to come.

I see the pattern in history—the ancient Greeks were known for their love Beauty and the Arts, the Romans, their love of law and justice, and then came Jesus who taught of a spiritual kingdom.

I see the pattern in nature. The seed that is planted in the ground will not begin to grow until the ground is warmed. And much of that first growth is in developing a strong root system. Without that root system underground—unseen to the eye—the plant will never grow long enough to flower. The stem will wither and die. The flower alone contains all the seeds with which to multiply and replenish the earth.

I see the pattern in music. The heart is the melody, the mind is the rhythm or beat and the spirit brings in all the harmonies.

And I see it in the development of us as human beings. The heart develops before the brain within the womb and emotions develop before the intellect outside the womb. The first 8 years, in particular, are reserved by nature for tending to the heart when a child's heart is open to

impressions and feelings because the mind is not yet too cluttered.

To me, an ounce of morning is worth a pound of afternoon where inspiration is concerned.

Inspiration comes to me in the very early morning hours, often before the sun comes up, when my mind is uncluttered. Childhood is the early morning of life.

So how does this pattern apply to learning? I would suggest, don't attempt to teach any principle, doctrine or academic subject until after you have sufficiently warmed and opened the heart. Leonardo da Vinci wrote: "Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing it takes in." And Plato agreed: "Knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind." Front end load the learning experience with story, rhyme, song, images and love. And then, make sure you leave room for the Spirit to do its work. When you ask all the questions and structure all the learning, you interfere with that individualized, customized spiritual learning experience.

Like St. Exupery advises: "When you want to build a ship, do not begin by gathering wood, cutting boards, and distributing work, but waken within the heart of man the desire for the vast and endless sea."

Take away the Spirit, take away the heart, and all that's left is purely academic.