

Henricks, HowardTeaching to Change Lives

5. The Law of Education

Hendricks argues that how people learn should govern how you teach. The teacher's job is not to perform, but to stimulate and direct the learner's own activity. The real measure of teaching is what the students end up doing, thinking, and living out — not how much the teacher knows or how well he lectures.

Key takeaways

- Teach nothing — and do nothing for a learner — that he can learn or do for himself. The teacher is coach and motivator; the learner is the doer.
- Learning moves through four levels (unconscious incompetence → conscious incompetence → conscious competence → unconscious competence). The hard part is getting people to admit they don't know so learning can start.
- Growth requires tension. Too much brings frustration; too little brings apathy. God disturbs our equilibrium on purpose to develop us.
- Come to every lesson with clear objectives. Three core goals: teach people how to think, how to learn, and how to work.

- Change thinking, not just behavior — behavior change alone is shallow and short-lived. Good teaching plants seeds that bear fruit later, in teachable moments.
- Master four basic skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking. Listening is the hardest and most neglected; television erodes reading and thinking.
- Failure is a necessary part of learning — like a child learning to walk, or the disciples who failed to cast out the demon.
- Know the exceptions: sometimes save time and just tell them; some students need encouragement to not quit; some are so hungry you tell them everything.

Passages worth keeping

“The ultimate test of teaching is not what you do or how well you do it, but what and how well the learner does.”

States the whole law: teaching is measured by the learner's activity, not the teacher's performance.

“So God moves into our lives by divine design, to periodically disturb our equilibrium. That's how he develops us.”

Ties the classroom principle of tension to how God grows believers.

How it connects

The teaching principle mirrors discipleship: God grows us not by keeping us comfortable but by disturbing our equilibrium and letting us learn through failure, just as Jesus did with the Twelve.

Scripture referenced

- **Mark 4** -- Parable of the sower — same seed, different soil; everything hangs on the learner's response.
- **Hebrews 5:8** -- Jesus 'learned obedience by the things he suffered' — learning through tension and suffering.
- **Mark 12:30** -- Love God with all your mind — no Christian may throw his mind into neutral.
- **Mark 9:14-29** -- Disciples fail to cast out the demon; their failure becomes a great learning experience ('this kind comes out by prayer').