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The courage to teach summary

Teachers choose their vocation for a number of reasons: the love of a subject, the desire to share one's passion with others, the care of young children, the interest in understanding the human spirit, or having a say in the formation of the next generation. But the demands of teaching make many teachers lose their courage. Is it possible to stay in this demanding profession without losing heart? In *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer takes teachers on an inner journey to reconnect their vocation and their students—and reclaim their passion for one of the most difficult and important human endeavours. This book is based on a simple premise: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. Palmer points out that when we consider teaching, we often start with the question what - what subjects will we teach? As we delve deeper, we ask the question how - what are the methods for teaching well? Then we ask the question why - for what purposes and for what purpose do we teach? But rarely, if ever, do we ask the question who - who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my autonomy shape - or distort - the way I relate to my students, my subjects, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions support and deepen the autonomy from which good teaching comes from? Good teaching comes in many forms, but good teachers seem to share an important trait: they are really present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subject. They are able to weave a complex network of connections between themselves, their subjects and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. Palmer writes from his own mentor, who seemed to break all the rules of good teaching - he gave non-stop lectures, there was little room for questions or comments, he listened poorly to students because he was eager to share his own knowledge of the subject. Yet he was an inspiring and effective teacher. Later, in his teaching career, Palmer tried to imitate his teacher's methods, but failed. He writes: As we learn more about who we are, we can learn techniques that reveal rather than conceal the personality from which good teaching comes. Palmer discovered that dialogue was more an integral part of his being than non-stop lectures, a method consistent with his mentor. A teaching method takes its credit integration with the teacher who employs it. A familiar phrase from Krishnamurti comes to mind: Don't ask How? Find out for yourself. Paradoxes, not polaritiesA common problem in classrooms is fear. There is nothing more crippling to learning than fear —whether it's in the student or in the teacher. Fear is present where there is a sense of disconnection, where teachers are far removed from their students and subjects. What teachers afraid? Palmer replies: ... a living encounter with a foreign adity that can speak freely, tell its own truth and can tell us what we may not want to hear. Teachers want control and are afraid to let their own worldview be challenged. However, the danger is that, in a school in Krishnamurti, it is possible for the teacher to talk about fear or ambition during a culture course in a way that his own fear or ambition is not recognized. This disconnection could be destructive in communicating to students. Palmer explores the nature of the disconnection we experience, which leads to a way of teaching and learning that is driven by fear. Another cause of our disconnection is the tendency to think in polarities. We could have encountered these polarities even if we read this exam - looking for the identity and integrity of the teacher is all right, but we need technique too. Or, more generally, it's great to understand each other, but you also have to find a job. The problem with these exploration plugs often encountered is that some of them are opposed to the other. Either - Or. One must be at the expense of the other. Palmer gives us a way out of this dilemma: he asks us if it is possible to think in terms of paradoxes. He quotes Niels Bohr, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist: The opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth. Can light behave simultaneously as particles and waves? Can thought discover its own limits? Can't teachers condition children when they don't condition themselves? Can you talk about the confusions in your life when you find a healthy way of life? Can teachers guide young people to discover a direction in their own lives without creating a role model? Can we find out who we are through the relationship? Palmer further shows the consequences of making such a division where the options of life are shown as mutually exclusive: We separate the head from the heart. The result is spirits that don't know how to feel and hearts that can't think. We separate facts from feelings. The result: bloodless facts that make the world distant, distant and ignorant of emotions that reduce the truth to what we feel today. We separate the theory of practice. The result: theories that have little to do with life and practice that are not informed by understanding. We separate teaching from learning. The result: teachers who speak but do not listen and students who listen don't talk. Paradox can be used in pedagogical design, thus embracing one approach at a time and rather than dividing either or. Palmer talks about six paradoxes that he is aware of when building a classroom session: Space must be demarcated and opened. There must be room for questions, but the discussion needs limits for The space must be welcoming and charged. An open space must be hospitable so that it is not prohibited, but it must also be difficult. The space must invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group. The space should honour the small stories of students and the big stories of disciplines and tradition. Space must support loneliness and surround it with community resources. The space should accommodate both silence and speech. A Community of Truth While the first three chapters of the book focus on the individual teacher, Palmer devotes the second part of the book to learning in a community. Teaching is a public profession that is practiced in private. Surgeons operate in the presence of other doctors, lawyers support their cases in public view, so why do teachers seek the safety of a closed classroom? Palmer reminds us that if we want to grow in our practice, we have two places to go: the inner field where teaching comes from and the community of other teachers from which we can learn more about ourselves and our profession. So what is the nature of a community that can support the individual teacher's quest to discover an integral way of teaching? Does it not rely on both sources? Palmer writes of a community of truth whose mark he claims: reality is a network of community relations, and we can only know reality by being in community with it. He adds: We only know reality by being in community with it. How can a human being know something about another... without leaving the mark of the car knowing about the known thing? (This characteristic) of relational knowledge transforms our ability to connect into strength. As connoisseurs, we no longer need to regret our desire to connect meaningfully with each other—and we don't need to overcome that responsibility by disconnecting from the world. If we were here simply as observers and not as participants in the world, we would not have the capacity to know. Palmer describes how a community of truth would invite diversity (various points of view are required by the multiple mysteries of great things); ambiguity (we understand the inadequacy of our concepts to embrace the immensity of great things); Creative conflict (conflict is necessary to correct our prejudices and prejudices about big things); honesty (lying about what we have seen would betray the truth of great things); humility (humility is the only goal through which great things can be seen - and once we have seen them, humility is the only possible posture); and freedom (tyranny in any form can only be overcome by invoking the grace of great things). By great things, Palmer means: the subjects around which the circle of researchers has always gathered - not the disciplines that study these subjects, not the who talk about them, not the theories that explain them, but the things themselves. It refers to the genes and ecosystems of biology, the shapes and colors of music and art, the motifs of history, the materials of engineering, the symbols of philosophy, the rigor of mathematics, the nuances of human relationships and the mystery of how things are coming to be. Is it possible to gather around the greatness of things in a learning community and not reduce their greatness in our attempt to commune? Palmer's language is simple, lucid and accessible. The book is written on different levels. It provides guidelines for good teaching. It takes the reader on an exploration of his own inner landscape. He talks about the need for education reform that begins with the individual teacher, who is part of a community of truth that is evolving into a movement that can challenge and change educational thinking as a whole. This, in turn, informs the practice of the individual teacher. Although the examples cited in the book are American, it is easy to draw parallels with its local reality. I have read this book on various occasions over the past three years, since I decided to teach, and I have found it revealing every time. Maybe that's the nature of great things - they reveal more of you every time you meet them. About authorParker J. Palmer is a senior associate of the American Association for Higher Education and senior advisor at the Fetzer Institute. Other books written by him are: *The Company of Strangers*, *The Active Life*, and *To Know As We Are Known*. Known.

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