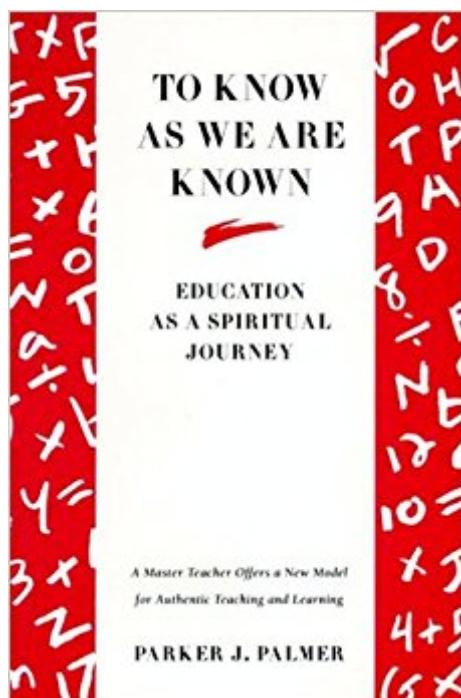


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# To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality Of Education



## **Synopsis**

This primer on authentic education explores how mind and heart can work together in the learning process. Moving beyond the bankruptcy of our current model of education, Parker Palmer finds the soul of education through a lifelong cultivation of the wisdom each of us possesses and can share to benefit others.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is the first book I've read by Parker Palmer although I've read essays, chapter excerpts, and several authors who cite him several times over the years. I was excited to have a full work by Mr. Palmer to take in and I found it exceptional even if I perhaps found myself perplexed from time to time (I'm sure Mr. Palmer would say that's a good thing). Immediately, Mr. Palmer presents a central metaphor of learning to do life "whole" by opening both the mind's eye which sees "a world of fact and reason" and the eye of the heart to see "a world warmed and transformed by the power of love." (Intro) A teacher, then, uses both eyes and becomes a "mediator between the knower and the unknown." (29) All throughout the book Palmer lends sound wisdom and keen insight into teaching

in meaning-filled and meaning-creating ways. He reminds the reader of the need for a learning space to be one that has openness, boundaries, and hospitality. (70) Conventional classrooms offer hurdles of "hidden curriculum" to rethink such as focusing on someone else's (teacher's) vision of reality, a hesitation to be held up for inspection and scrutiny as the teacher / authority / expert, and a structure set up to build isolation easily and often. (34-39) No-brainer wisdom? Perhaps, yet Mr Parker presents these pieces in a whole that is unified in tone and written in accessible, beautiful prose that won't leave the reader saying, "I already knew that!" but instead, "Of course!" This quote particularly struck me as something I've articulated several times in my life: "Several times in my teaching career I have become someone else's student, and each time the experience has had a marked impact on my own teaching. I was forcefully reminded that education is not just a cognitive process, not just the transmission of facts and reasons." (115) This duality is yet again a way Palmer hopes people will see the value in being a "whole person" seeing and living with both eyes open. It was as if Mr. Palmer looked at my life mixed with playing the student and the teacher role and said, "I know exactly what you mean." As for occasionally feeling perplexed, I think I was surprised by how often I felt like the text was non-succinct even though it has a relatively short page count and narrow focus. I had to fight moments when I was tempted to think, "Yes, you said that; please move on." One example is the story of Abba Felix which, while a great story, runs through the book more like a thick scratchy rope than a thread and while I was captivated by the many examples and stories in chapters 5-6 I had to push myself in earlier chapters. With that said, there are too many gems in this book to dismiss it as rough. Thanks for reading. thelifemosaic

I'm not finished reading yet, but so far, it's one of the most insightful books I've read in a very long time. It requires focus on my part - it's deep - but it is well worth it. I think it could be a helpful book for every teacher - faithful, faithless, and any/every faith. If you want to deepen your understanding of education, and life, read this book.

In a time when the morale of the teaching profession in most countries is at an all time low, Palmer's book stand out as a beacon to warn and draw our attention to what education is truly about. The story about Abba Felix and that there are 'no more words nowadays' stands at the heart of this book. In this short story about a Desert Father, Palmer has developed a spirituality of education in which obedience to God's words will lead to spiritual formation of the teacher and the student. First, Palmer rightly pointed out that objectivism and the pursuit of knowledge without reflection is dangerous. His illustration with the Manhattan project is instructive. However, he should have

included the societal, economic and cultural influences in his argument. One of the problems with education today is that instead of being a process of 'reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and world', it became a means to obtaining 'paper' qualifications. Education has been hijacked to be an instrument in which students can achieve economic success and teachers became clogs in the machine that produce thousands of graduates annually who are only skilled in passing examinations. Second, he mentioned 'a learning space' as an antidote to 'objectivist' teaching methods. This learning space has openness, boundaries and hospitality. I wonder how Palmer would translate that into an Asian context. Openness, boundaries and hospitality will be difficult in a culture of shame ('saving face') and hierachal respect for elders, social ranks and qualifications. Finally, 'transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher'. Palmer listed the disciplines of studying widely, silence, solitude and prayer as important in bringing about this transformation. However Palmer painted a bland picture of a 'generic' God as the focus of these disciplines. I would that he be more Trinitarian in his approach.

Any education is good, respecting that the learner can learn, thus spiritual, because the teacher's mind is open to the fact that he can. It is Love that teaches, is willing to teach, and puts the teacher in a leading, guiding position. The innocent respect that respect is shown them and learn. All education coursework should include Parker Palmer's work. He is very aware that there is much good out there, happening all the time, something much larger than he. He knows that he doesn't have to give it a name or verbally worship it, but DO it and GIVE it.

You need to read this book if you haven't already. Parker Palmer is an amazing author and I love his philosophies on education and community.

This book has the potential to bring even the most agnostic educator into the discussion of spirituality as essential to healthy education. These pages are full of both the deep summations of a spiritual elder, and the critical pointedness of a social philosopher. All that being said, I walked away from this book with a sense that the simple (but not easy) exploration of truth, love and community is the path to the type of education we need as we help humans develop.

Palmer speaks to my soul and hopefully to all who touch the lives of young people! I've read several of his books and by far, this is the most inspirational.

Fan of Parker Palmer. This book was as personal like most of his writing. Thus, it fit with the subject matter of finding the personal in teaching. Will be a book I'll return to often as I enter into conversation with Palmer.

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