

Blog



Learning

Are we learning?

“The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn.” (Carl Rogers) Personal growth and development is essential in life, and it comes through a commitment to learning. “Let the wise hear and increase in learning.” (Proverbs 1:5) A healthy Christian thrives on curiosity and the never waning pursuit of learning. We are encouraged to be life long learners.

Amazingly, Jesus in his incarnation was committed to learning. In identifying with us, the omniscient God humbled himself to a process of learning. “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.” (Hebrews 5:8) From an early age he was committed to growth and development through

learning. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.” (Luke 2:52) This is seen when, as a twelve year old boy, the young Jesus was discovered sitting with and learning from the leading learned teachers of his day.

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” (Luke 2:46-47)

There are a number of pointers we can perhaps glean from the example of Jesus which may help us in our own pursuit of growth, development and learning.

Learning requires the right place - “in the temple”

Where we seek out learning is as important as what we learn. In the parable of the sower, the seed was only as effective as the soil in which it could grow. Jesus sought out the temple as the ideal place to enhance his learning. If we are serious about learning we need to ensure we put ourselves in the right soil.

Learning requires the right posture - “sitting”

The attitude we adopt in learning is as important as what we learn. One would imagine that the eternal Son of God ought to have been the One doing the teaching. But modelling genuine humility, Jesus in his humanity was keen to sit at the feet of experienced, older men in order to learn. If we are serious about learning we ought to be willing to sit in humility at the feet of others.

Learning requires the right people - “among the teachers”

The teachers we look to for inspiration are as important as what we learn. Who we learn from will determine the direction we take and

the person we become. Jesus warned his disciples to avoid the teaching of the Pharisees. Paul cautioned that associating with persuasive false teachers corrupts good character. If we are serious about learning we would do well to learn from the right people.

Learning requires the right listening skills - *“listening to them”*

Listening is the key to great learning. “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak.” (James 1:19) Good listening skills lead to greater learning. “Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.” (Larry King) It is hard to progress if we already know it all. Jesus listened, and so he learned. If we are serious about learning we would benefit from developing our listening skills.

Learning requires asking the right questions - *“asking them questions”*

Insight and learning emerge from asking the right questions. “A prudent question is one-half of wisdom.” (Francis Bacon) Jesus learned from his tutors by asking questions. Paul’s writing style in his New Testament letters was often to pose questions and then develop an answer. We all learn by turning our inquisitiveness into questions. If we are serious about learning we need to ask the right questions.

Learning requires the right studying - *“his understanding”*

Learning is not just about knowledge. It is about appreciation, consideration, realisation and application. Learning is about studying and understanding. We can know a lot and learn nothing. Or we can grapple with what we know until we’ve gained insight and learning. Jesus amazed onlookers with what he understood. If we are serious about learning we will commit to studying and seek to understand.

Learning requires the right contribution - “and his answers”

Learning is not just about receiving. It is also about contributing. Learning is a two way street. “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.” (Galatians 6:6) Having respectfully sat and listened to his elders, Jesus contributed to the discussion with some insights of his own. All effective learning is interactive. Students have something to say which can enhance the learning experience. If we are serious about learning we must be confident enough to contribute.

“I am always ready to learn.” (Winston Churchill) A willingness to learn combined with a commitment to growth will almost certainly help us to progress and mature so that we, “grow up in every way.” (Ephesians 4:15) Jesus set us a perfect example of how to learn. Being about his Father’s business included learning. As we seek to follow Christ, may we also be learners.