



Following Jesus: Learning

February 21, 2016

Matthew 5:1-2; 7:24-27

We spoke about the most compelling person who ever lived, Jesus, and how He's given us the most compelling mission possible. Last week we noted how Jesus called his disciples: *"Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men."*

This sermon series are all action words ("...ING"). To follow Jesus means several things. One of those is our topic today, **"learning."** There's so much to learn. To not learn is to remain ignorant or become obsolete. It's harder and harder to stay informed with the information avalanche. It becomes important to know what's important, and who we can trust to teach us.

Just as there are different "Love Languages," so there are different ways of learning. Some prefer to read or hear a lecture. Some prefer group discussion. Others learn best by actually doing something. The disciples learned from Jesus in ALL of these ways – He read from scripture, he gave sermons, He took Q & A's, He led small group discussions and He released them to go and preach even before His resurrection. How do you learn best? "What's your Learning Language style?"

Matt 5:1-2

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: Our scriptures bookend the Sermon on the Mount. When finished, the crowds were "amazed" at his teaching. They responded to his knowledge, but also to His authority.

After teaching, He concluded the Sermon on the Mount by telling them to put everything into practice.

Matt 7:24-27

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

WHY should we learn? Because we want to follow Jesus.

The word for "disciple" in Greek means "learner." Following Jesus means we need to learn how. Learning is a life-long practice.

7 traits of learners:

Curiosity Without curiosity, learning ends. Curiosity is the engine of achievement. Curiosity may have "killed the cat," but if that's the case, we could say "the cat died nobly." We could add: "the cat also has 9 lives." The phrase "curiosity killed the cat" also ends with: "but satisfaction brought it back."

Learners ask questions. The older I get the more questions I have. The older I get, the more I realize how much I don't know.

The disciples were certainly curious. They asked Jesus a lot of "why?" questions:

"Why do you speak to the people in parables?" "Why couldn't we drive the demon out of the man?"

Nicodemus didn't understand how a person could be "born again."

Peter didn't understand why Jesus had to die.

I would add a word of caution, when Jesus was speaking to Peter about following Him, Peter tried to deflect Jesus' words by asking "What about him?" (John). Sometimes "curiosity" can be a smokescreen that

makes us busybodies and gossips. So, curiosity needs to be shaped in the right direction.

Humility – We see humility in Jesus – riding on a donkey, washing the feet of the disciples, dying on the cross. But Jesus' way is contrary to our own preference. Pride is the great enemy of humility.

Humility opens doors to learning because we are willing to admit “I don't know it all.” Far too many of us refuse to learn the Bible because we're embarrassed that we don't know more. Instead of being curious and asking questions, we're afraid we'll look ignorant, so we avoid those places and situations and never ask questions and thus, never learn.

Seminary didn't/couldn't prepare me for the rigors of pastoral ministry. I didn't know how to do a LOT of things because I'd never done them before. I learned through doing (trial and error). (Funerals, weddings, counseling). Admitting our need is essential to learning.

Accountability – we do better when someone holds us accountable. Having a teammate(s) is essential. “*Two are better than one!*” Jesus sent 72 disciples out, but didn't send them out as individuals; they were sent two at a time. Learning can exponentially increase when teamed with others. Teammates share insights with each other. The word for “disciple,” singular, is found 28x in the New Testament (only once in the Old), but the word “disciples” is found 266x in the NT (only once in the Old). Being accountable to another person helps in many ways.

Committed – Learning can be hard work and not always fun. Goofing off is much easier. But it helps to make a commitment. We have a group of men who have made a commitment to go through the Bible chapter by chapter. They meet on Thursdays for exactly an hour. They finished Psalm 19 this week. Next up is Psalm 20-25. They've been doing this for 2 years. They estimate it will take another 3 years to complete it.

Courageous – there are risks and we can fail (the disciples had a LOT of that). Learning means we must make changes. Most of us don't like those changes. It takes courage for someone to come visit Asbury for

the 1st time. It takes courage for someone to go to a class for the first time. It takes courage for someone to go to Celebrate Recovery and to admit that they have some problems.

Deal with Conflict –learning may disrupt our current way of life. They challenge, correct and rebuke us. **2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**

Practitioners 2 Tim. 3:17 *so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

(Next week's sermon is about "practicing") "Practice what you Preach." "Learning" is experiential. We learn in different ways. When I was at ORU we had to take a half-hour P.E. class every semester. I thought golf would be a great one to take. So we read books on golf – how the game got started, what the rules were, etc. We never actually played golf – we just read about it. (I wish we'd only read about tumbling/trampoline)

Our students going on SBM will get more out of their week.

If we aren't merely "followers of Jesus" but followers of Jesus who are making disciples, we shouldn't just be "learners" but "learners who are making learners."

Heb 5:11-12a We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be TEACHERS

Who teaches us makes all the difference in the world

I heard an author discussing Sir Winston Churchill. Many think Churchill was the greatest figure of the 20th century, as he kept Great Britain from surrendering to Hitler. Someone asked this author about Churchill's faith. He said he thought he was an atheist. I'd never heard that before. I read a book this week written by Churchill's great-grandson. It's entitled: God and Churchill. As a child, Churchill was completely ignored by his father. There was virtually no relationship between father and son. When Winston spent an evening with his own

adult son, he told his son: “I’ve spent more time with you in this one evening than my father spent with me in his entire life.” His relationship with his mother wasn’t any better. They were both socialites who didn’t have time for their son. They sent him away to boarding school. He was beaten with a cane by a teacher. Being small, he was bullied by the other students. Once when his father came to the town where he was in school to speak at an event, he didn’t even go to see Winston. It was shattering. Why didn’t Winston crater with such parental rejection? There was one person who truly cared about him: his nanny. He called her “Woom” (probably short for “Woman” – which he couldn’t pronounce). Her name was Mrs. Elizabeth Everest, even though she probably wasn’t married (they called Nannies “Mrs.” in that day). “Woom” was a strong Christian. She helped him memorize scripture and knelt with him in prayer. She explained the world to him in distinctly Christian terms. Even in seasons of doubt, Churchill instinctively saw things through a biblical outlook. That lens was why he was able to offer to the world the resolve to stand against Nazism. I’m not God – so I can’t tell you for certain that Churchill was a Christian or not. Certainly some of his application of the faith, like some of ours, was skewed. Mrs. Everest died in 1895. He died 70 years later in 1965. On his nightstand by his deathbed was a picture of Mrs. Everest. She taught. She had influence. She fished. She may have caught Winston Churchill.

Jesus is our Teacher, authority and Lord. His Disciples are “learners.” What was Jesus teaching? “To follow Him and to become fishers of men.” We follow His model.

How are you **learning to follow Jesus** by being fishers of men? How can we help make that happen? What next steps do you need to take?