



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

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Definition of Learning

Learning is the process by which new information is ingested, analyzed, and prepared for storage in the memory until it is required for use by the mind in performing its various functions.

What Is Learning?

It is important to realize these functions:

- Telling is *not* teaching.
- Listening is *not* learning.

Expounding and explaining an idea in detail may require great time and effort on the part of the speaker, but no guarantee is offered that learning has taken place on the part of the listeners. Even Jesus, the greatest Teacher of all time, had to face this truth.



And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

(Matthew 13:10-13)

Most of the people who heard Jesus' parables stopped right there—just hearing. They did not understand, nor did they care to. It was only to those disciples who came to Jesus asking and eager that He was able to truly teach the deep meaning of what He said.

The same problem occurred when Jesus tried to explain about His approaching death.

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Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

(John 2:18-22)

Though Jesus had communicated a deep truth, neither the Pharisees nor the disciples grasped it. They heard, yet they really *had not heard* at all. The truth had slipped right past them without their even knowing it. It was not until much later, after Jesus' death and resurrection, that the disciples had a new framework of understanding and began to comprehend what the Lord had said.

Learning—Joint Effort of Teacher/Student

Learning is a joint effort between teacher and student. It is clear that a cooperation must be present between the teacher and the listener if learning is to take place. It is the teacher's responsibility to secure the student's attention and to present the material in such a way that the student can understand it. The student, on the other hand, is responsible to give the teacher his attention and to try to understand what is being communicated.

Learning takes place only when the teacher has successfully transmitted the idea from his own mind to the mind of the listener. If, however, the idea which was transmitted by the teacher was not received in the same form by the listener, no learning has occurred. Miscommunication or confusion is the result.

In addition to grasping the material, the listener must also be able to apply the knowledge to solving related problems. Simply parroting the information is not enough—it must be ingested.

How People Learn

Analysis of Data

When information has been ingested, the brain records the entry and immediately begins the work of analysis. It does this by interpreting

the new information in the light of other data which has been filed and stored previously. In its organized fashion, the brain tries to file the new facts into its memory bank—not haphazardly—but with order. The new information must be systematically related to what the brain already *knows*. If information is unclear and cannot be interpreted for assimilation and future use, the mind will do one of two things:

- If the data is irrelevant or unimportant, the mind simply *tunes it out* or goes into *neutral*.
- If the data is important, the mind will begin to formulate questions and demand more information so as to clarify and assimilate it for storage and future action.

Ingestion—The Five Natural Senses

Learning begins by ingesting information through one or more of the five senses: **sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.**

A baby who puts his hand on the hot stove may have to learn the meaning of the word “hot” through his sense of **touch**. As he grows, he will learn that the **smell** of cooking food means dinner will soon be served; ice cream has a cold, smooth, sweet **taste**; **hearing** his daddy’s firm command means he had better obey; **seeing** the beautiful flowers means spring is coming. Millions of concepts are absorbed by any growing human—without his even being aware of it—through the natural senses.

Sometimes people are born with one or more of their senses impaired. This may slow the learning process at first, but it will eventually force the other senses to compensate. If a person were to find himself with all five senses inoperative, it would be impossible for him to learn from another person. His learning would then be very slow and would come from repeated trial and error.

In our study of evangelism in chapter seven, we learn from Stevens’ Law that the five senses are vital to our decision-making. We can now understand more fully why this is true. Since decision-making is a process of the mind, it is very dependent upon the information that has been or is being ingested and analyzed. This ingestion is largely accomplished through the five natural senses.

Ingestion and The Spiritual “Sixth Sense”

In addition to the five natural senses, every born-again Child of God is blessed with a *sixth sense* when the Holy Spirit takes up residence in his life.

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

(1 Corinthians 2:10-14)

This passage means exactly what it says. The only people who can enjoy a personal relationship with God and understand spiritual truth are those who have the Spirit of God living within them. When a person invites Christ into his life, the *Third Person* of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—takes up residence in his life and establishes a new relationship and understanding between the person and God. As the person grows in this relationship, he will discover that Someone has *turned on a spiritual lightbulb* in his mind. The things of God and the teachings of the Bible, which were once so vague and distant, are now clear and personal. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He gives increasing understanding and deep insights of God because He is the very mind of Christ. He is our *sixth sense* in discerning and learning.

Key to Learning—Holy Spirit

Consider what the following passages teach about the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

(John 14:26)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

(John 16:13-15)

It is very important that the Christian teacher realize the importance of this sixth sense when trying to impart spiritual truth. If the Spirit of God does not dwell within the listener, there is no way that he can understand what the teacher is saying. If the teacher finds his listener is not grasping spiritual truth, he may want to double check the person's salvation experience. It may be that the reason he is not understanding is that he has never truly received Christ.

Factors Which Aid Learning

Understanding

Understanding comes by ingesting information in a way which is—

- Interesting,
- Relevant, and
- Logically presented.

If a person can begin with what he knows and work toward the unknown, step by step, he will find that understanding will come easily.

The teacher who aims at helping his students to achieve understanding will find this is not an easy task. It requires that the teacher must master the material being taught and must also be sensitive to his students and their needs.

If the teacher senses that his listeners have not grasped a certain point, he will know that he must not proceed until they do. Then he must try to tackle the problem from a different or more creative angle until the truth is thoroughly ingested. Of course, this is not an easy task and will require much time and effort by the teacher. It will, however, pay off handsomely in the achieving of understanding.

*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept;
line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:
(Isaiah 28:10)*

Repetition

Information must be reviewed:

- In a practical way, and
- Over a period of time.

This is so it can be recalled with 100% accuracy. The more faculties that can be used in review, the less time it will require to perfectly master the material. Some of the faculties helpful to use consist of the following.

- Seeing
- Speaking
- Writing
- Hearing

Retention

The ability to retain and recall information over a long period of time is based upon the student's original interest, understanding, over-learning, and reproduction.

Everyone at one time or other has passed exams on things he can no longer do or recall. If called upon today, he would be at a loss to reproduce the action or the information. It has simply lain in the mind too long without review. Unused truth is transferred from the conscious mind to the subconscious, and it sometimes becomes buried there. To recall it to the conscious would take a great deal of time and effort—and sometimes even relearning.

The only way to retain something is to—

- Review it **AND** • Share it

Reproduction

The ability to accurately reproduce material which has been ingested is based upon our understanding of the material and degree to which it has been overlearned.

Reproduction forces the brain to process the data received so that it can be transmitted. This processing of data requires **review** of the information which, in turn, aids **retention**.

It has been said:

Thoughts disentangle themselves passing through the lips or through the fingertips.

Application

Learning which is never acted upon soon becomes dormant because it is not relevant to daily life. Application puts into practice that which has been learned and causes the information to be of personal value to the learner.

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

(Deuteronomy 5:1)

When Jesus commanded the Eleven to make disciples, He was not calling them to a life of philosophy but one of service.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Matthew 28:20)

It is clear that the kind of *teaching* Jesus desires here is not simply *head knowledge*, but it is the teaching which results in obedience and application. The teacher is to work with the learner until the content of the instruction is not only observable in the learner's life, but to the extent that it is so deeply understood the learner can teach it to another.

Scriptural Concepts to Learn

Fear God

Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.
(Deuteronomy 4:10)

Learn The Commandments

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.
(Psalms 119:73)

Here we see how understanding and learning go together.

Do Good

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.
(Isaiah 1:17)

Learn Bible Doctrine

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.
(Isaiah 29:24)

Depart From Evil

Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.
(Jeremiah 10:2)

Obey

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

(Hebrews 5:8)

Be Content

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

(Philippians 4:11)

Learn Jesus' Teaching

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

(Matthew 11:29)

Other Biblical Concepts on Learning

Wise Men Will Increase In Learning

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

(Proverbs 1:5)

God Can Give Skill In Learning

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

(Daniel 1:17)

The Bible Has Been Written For Our Learning

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

(Romans 15:4)

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