

The Learning Process

Transcribed/Edited from Sermon.2/08/2009.Peter Scott



Introduction

In seeking to pray correctly for the unsaved we often don't understand how we ourselves got saved. So how do we go about this with any kind of wisdom?

In this short tract, I want to give you an overview of the learning process, going from knowing about God's creation to being a devoted follower of Christ. That is huge; sometimes people can make that leap in a few hours, sometimes it takes a lifetime. Sometimes it never happens. Let me tell you how we learn . . .

The Example

As mankind goes down the path of trying to create artificial intelligence, scientists have been trying to find out how human beings learn so they can get computers to learn. That is a strange concept in itself, but nevertheless, the study of how people learn is found in how children learn. If you ask a child from a certain age group to draw a picture of mommy or daddy, they will draw a circle, a straight line, two lines for legs, and two lines for arms. In a certain age group, that's it.

Then a few months or a year later, suddenly mommy has a little dress triangle and maybe curly hair. And a little bit later, something of ears takes shape and eyebrows and eyes and nose, maybe even shoes. The idea is that the child is learning an overview sketch of things. Sometimes not very correctly, just an overview of the entire idea, but over time they start filling in the details.



Some of our eighth grade teachers thought we should know *everything* perfectly by exam time. “You’ve got to know the subject; there’s going to be an exam by the end of the semester; and you’ve got to know it all!” There wasn’t any of the learning-how-to-learn process. They should have given us an overview and let us start filling in the details little by little. Then they would have understood how human beings actually learn.

Let’s look at how you learn to relate to your mom. When you were just being formed in the womb you actually recognized your mom’s voice so that after you were born, three or four women could come into the room and you would recognize your mother even though you didn’t see her, just by the sound of her voice, because you were listening in the womb. You may not know anything else about her; you still have a lot of filling in to do. And if your mom is still with us, you are still coloring in the lines of understanding her.

As a teenager I thought I understood girls. All I had was a skeleton; I had no idea. Now I host a home group and it’s *all* girls; I’m *still* learning about women, how different they really are from men. But that’s the way we learn; we don’t get it all at once. We have an outline so we are not going to be totally clueless but it takes time and experience to get everything.

When we go into this sanctuary-room the lights may not be on, but we already know there are chairs on the left and chairs on the right and there is an aisle down the middle. We don't really know that this chair has a tag, etc.; the details haven't been filled in. The problem is that as we go down this learning process, we make choices about things that we don't really understand. There are some things we may never know. This becomes evident from the very beginning. That's why we draw outlines and go down through this shadowy thing called "life," because we cannot know everything at once.

For instance, nobody really knows how gravity works. However it is a fundamental thing a child experiences first off, how it works. He's learning how to hold his head up; he's fighting against gravity. In the womb he didn't have to do that. And so he learns about inertia and gravity. And yet no one can really explain satisfactorily why an object seven million light-years away is attracted to the earth. Nobody. We may never know.

But there are other things we *do* know and understand. As we go through life, we are curious and want to start coloring things in and begin to appreciate the Creation.

Who is God?

One of the thoughts that comes to us early on in life is the concept of God. And also a concept of ourselves. Both of these things are something we learn about. If you think you've arrived about learning who you are, you haven't got a clue. If you think you know who God is, even after you've been saved at the cross, you really haven't got a clue. There is more for you to learn! He says, "*Seek and you shall find.*" Scripture doesn't tell us to stop at the cross.

So we pray for those loved ones; we pray for the lost. We say, "Just get them saved." We do that and they get saved but they haven't got the whole concept down. Let's look at a key verse in Romans.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power, divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what had been made so that they (everybody) are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Without excuse for what? For not knowing that there is a God in heaven. In other words Creation itself speaks so strongly, so powerfully that everybody, anywhere in the world that is an intelligent creature knows

that there is a God because of this Creation. And if they deny it they are denying the whole process of learning.

For you have formed my inward parts; You did weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139)

We can look at this Creation outwardly but we can also look at ourselves and our physical bodies, our mental processes and say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Every day we can say, "This is unbelievable. How could this possibly happen by chance?" And so, we come to the conclusion that there is a Creator. Now we have an outline, a sketch, a stick figure of who God the Creator is. There *is* a Creator. We can say also that there is a Force throughout the universe.

The Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water. (Genesis 1:2)

This translation in Hebrew really means there was a vibration, like a sound wave over the surface of the waters; there was a Force involved in the Creation in the very, very beginning. So here is the idea, an outline: Creator, Creation, Force, understanding a little bit more about God.

God thunders with His voice, wondrously doing great things we cannot possibly comprehend. (Job 37:5)

Because He is such a powerful Creator we just do not understand all the things He is, but we can appreciate them. In a few of the thunderstorms we've had lately, I have come to appreciate God a little bit more. When those storms started to move in, I began to think of where I could hide, what part of the house could I stay in without having to worry about something happening to me. The wind was swirling around; the trees had no where to go so a lot of them went down. (Interestingly one of the "Witness Trees" over in Gettysburg fell.¹)

After you've come to grips with the unsaved person you are praying for, you may be talking to him of these very things. What you are doing is drawing a sketch for them . . . saying listen, "This is what the scriptures say" and then begin drawing the outline. "Listen, there is a Creator, there is a Force, and you need to understand you are not just by happenstance. All this speaks of a God." And then there should be an introduction of a wonderful Mind in that painting that He's drawing in their thoughts. Now we start to see something more visible of our Creator in Exodus 34 where He reveals Himself to Moses:

The Lord God, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth. (Exodus 34)

Those are things we would say up until now are *human* characteristics, not characteristics of a God, not characteristics of a Creator. And so there are a lot of religions that stop at an image of God as a Creator, as a Force but they never go any further. They say God doesn't have any character. But we know that is not true; He does have character and the scriptures speak exactly of those things, "*The Lord God compassionate.*" Aren't you glad he said that? He could have said, "*The Lord God stern or The Lord God exacting.*" The first thing out of His mouth when revealing Himself to Moses, "*The Lord God compassionate; The Lord God gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth.*" And when you share that with someone, there is probably already something inside of them saying, "I need God." There is something inside, a "knower," waiting to be able to say Amen.

Then the eyebrows are painted on the picture. The eyes they're not just round, but they are shaped like real eyes. This is awesome; God has character; He expresses Himself in compassionate ways through emotions and doing things we can understand. He is not just about things we cannot comprehend but He is also about things we can. Now those we have been praying for begin to see God differently. Mentally, over a period of time, they start to *grow* into an understanding.

Further we see:

... the fruit of the Spirit (God's character) is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

Often the unsaved do not understand but as we speak to them, we speak life to the soul who does not know and begin to color in the picture even more. The end result is going from a stick figure to something like the painting of God in the Sistine Chapel.

In John 3:16 we are introduced for the very first time, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.*" If there's a Son then there's a Father and Jesus always referred to God as Father, our Father who art in heaven.

Now I've been told that during the day of Christ many people prayed to God as the Father. Regardless of whether this is true or not, we do know we are here introduced to God differently, now in a *family* context. Now if we had stopped at God as Creator, a Force, with character, a good character, we would have stopped at one type of religion. But now we have a religion that says more: we can relate to God as both a Father and a Son! What a strange idea. How can we draw that stick figure? We begin to understand some of the complexities of this God we call Christ, of this relig-

ion we've come to grips with, this relationship with our Lord, a little bit more closely. A mystery starts to entice us. A Father/Son relationship and because of that fellowship, the love of God is born. It wasn't because His character was good. Not because He was Creator, but because out of that relationship, He gave His only begotten Son. The work of the Cross is awesome work. He said, "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13)"

In John 13, we are introduced to the trinity in even more detail than we may want to know. He said I'm going to go and I'm going to send to you the Holy Spirit. He's going to come and He's going to teach you and guide you and comfort you. In verse 18 He says, "*I will not leave you as orphans.*" Now we start thinking about God, Creator, Force, compassionate, Father and Son, Savior; He loves us. Now, wait a minute. Holy Spirit? He said He will not leave us as orphans, one who's father and mother are no longer alive, one who's been deserted to live their life on their own unction and abilities, whatever resources they can muster up. But Jesus says, "*Wait a minute, the Holy Spirit will come because I don't want to leave you as orphans that somehow you will have to make it on your own.*" God doesn't want us to make it on our own. Isn't that good? He wants to be living inside of us in such a way we'll know our God lives.

That's what our testimony is about. So we pray and we share these things with those we love.

Then in Revelation we are introduced to God in still another way, a resurrected, victorious God, not one who is agonizing on the cross, not one who is walking around as a man. But, as one who is described in Revelation 1:14, "*His head and hair were white as wool and snow and His eyes were like a flame of fire,*" a God who is alien to us! We would not recognize this as a human being. We would say, "Whoa, *that* was God!" It's the same God, same Creator, the same one with the Force over the waters. The same one who showed Himself as compassionate; the same one who gave His only begotten Son; the same one who sent the Holy Spirit. But now yet another trait comes forth. Up until now you may have thought, with all those different aspects that have been pointed out, "Now, I know God." You are just kidding yourself. You've still only got the "outline." That's all that's been given here, the stick figure of who God really is. Throughout all your life God is going to color in all the parts of who He is that will surprise you at every glance.

Who are We?

In this learning process we also go through a transition of who *we* are, not just our idea of God. When you are praying for the lost, many of them have a problem even knowing who *they* are nevermind who God is. They have to understand something about themselves too, not generally known. We start this process in school these days where we are taught humans are just animals, just creatures. “You are just DNA not even an animal, etc.” At some point you might say you know you are a man not an animal, at least that, and by the way, you can make intelligent decisions . . . That’s pretty good; some people don’t even get that far, they’re just DNA. In other words they believe nothing is wrong or right; whatever happens, happens. People actually believe this.

Well, we must say to the unsaved person, “That’s *not true*.” Instead, God called Adam to Himself in the garden and brought the animals to him and he was looking for something he didn’t even know until he saw Eve. Then he knew what he was looking for! After the Fall, God did a lot of things. I’m going to sum up the Old Testament in one “swoop.” The whole context of human experience after the Fall was to lead us to one thing:

For the law of the life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.. (Romans 8:2)

No matter how much you try to do things according to your concept of God, you are going to fail. It brings you right to the cross. The whole unredeemed process brings you to the end conclusion that you still need to be redeemed. “I’m not good; I need to be good. I don’t know how to get there.” That’s what the concept of understanding the law is all about. A lot of people come to that conclusion, “I’m not good, I’m not going to make it, my whole life doesn’t make any sense no matter what, there’s no hope for my life anyway.” Haven’t we heard that? “It doesn’t matter; I’m not in the Book. It really doesn’t matter!” Well they need to be redeemed, plain and simple. They need to be bought back; they need to be saved.

So now we have the stick figure of ourselves, a redeemed stick figure as we come to the cross and we give our life to Jesus. He is our Savior; we’re saved. So now we can stop praying for the saved man? No. It says, “Go unto all the world and **what?** (Matthew 28:19)” Make disciples. It doesn’t say to just save them. Once the person is redeemed he slowly comes to the conclusion he cannot do it and that Christ is going to do it for him instead.

But now he needs to know something else. He needs to become a bond-slave to our Lord. So Jesus is not just Savior but now he is Lord to us. “Okay, so I’m redeemed and now I am a slave.” This is a good place. If you miss that step, you may have to go back, because that is a part of who we are, slaves to our God. We are not free to do our own thing.

Then He calls us *friends*. Just when you get it right that you are a slave, He says yet you are *not* a slave.

Love has no greater love than this than to lay down his love for his friends . . . and I’ve called you friends(John 15:13)

*I do not call you as slaves but as **sons and daughters**. (1 Corinthians 7:21)*

Knowing and understanding the heart of God is there; that’s the process. We are not just called to do things blindly but He wants us to know and to understand His heart. Now we come to know and understand ourselves in a much different way. “I’m not just redeemed, I’m not just a slave, I’m a son or daughter of Christ. I feel better already but I’ve still got a ways to go.” Keep praying.

*He has made us a kingdom of **priests** to our God (Revelation 1:6)*

We have to understand this. Before we could rely upon those who were discipling us; maybe they were our pastors, bishops or the church hierarchy, whoever they might be, they were the ones who understood religion and God. “I’m just learning from them, I’m redeemed, I’m not just a slave but a son, but now I understand I am a *priest*. Those others should not have had the place of a priest; *I* have to go before the throne of God. *I* have the place to go into the holy of holies; *I* have the responsibility for my relationship with Christ, not them. *I* do.”

So in the stick figure, “I’m saved, I’m a slave, I’m a friend, I’m a royal priest!” That’s who you are. Every single one of you. Thankfully He doesn’t leave us there. We are also *overcomers*, one who is on the winning side.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony and they did not love their life even unto death. (Revelation 12:11)

Can you see how the painting is starting to take on more dimension, where you can actually sink your teeth into it? It isn’t just empty concepts lost in shadows but you start to understand something more about where God is leading you.

Here is the clincher. Most of the songs we sing in church don't describe all of these aspects. They often mention Creation but then take this giant leap to devotion, being a *devoted follower*, being the beloved. Song of Solomon starts out in the first verse, "*that I might know the kisses of His mouth. . . they are better than wine.*" What is this talking about? Paul says, "*O, Lord that I might know you,*" at the end of his life (Philippians 3:10). If Paul didn't know, who does? What's that all about? What drove Mary to the tomb to just sit there, waiting? What was it that caused Peter and the others to run to the tomb when she went back to tell them the Lord was gone. He is risen. They ran! What was that?

This is something a little more difficult to describe and paint in. It's something one cannot easily explain in fullness. But you *know* when you've got it, the *devotion* you have in your heart to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He calls you by a special name that no one knows except Himself! The bible says that (Revelation 2:17). You don't even know it yet. One of them is "Beloved." When He calls you friend and He calls you slave, when He calls you anything, when He comes to you and says, "Beloved, I have something for you," you are going to pay attention. Your heart responds in like manner, "Beloved, Lord, Savior, Friend, my Beloved, whatever You want. I am yours. This thing called 'me' belongs to You."

So when we pray for those to come into the kingdom of God, pray for the learning process to continue in their lives. Unless the Holy Spirit is doing it, they will not be able to comprehend those complex thoughts we've shared. They will still think they are just DNA walking around on this earth.

I had a roommate in college who was so very smart, that's where he ended his religion, that we were creatures of smartness. I asked once, "What if God showed up and you could see him visibly and He spoke to you, 'Michael, you are going to hell and you need to repent; you need to serve me the rest of your life'?" He said he would believe it was a trick, that it was a hologram and would walk away. How could God possibly get ahold of this man?

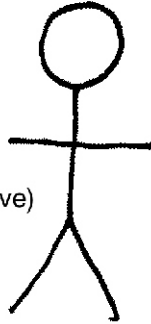
Conclusion

You see, all of these words are just words in the heart of an unsaved person. Inside there is a desire to know God, that God has created inside each of us. *A man is deaf until he dies in order to live.* Our job is to pray until the Holy Spirit goes in there and turns up the soil of the heart, number

one. Number two, the word of God would be planted there and it would start to grow; they would come to know something of the character and nature of God. They would understand something of the Fatherhood and the Son coming to save us. They would understand something of the Holy Spirit enabling us to work and live this life that is so complicated we only get ourselves into trouble on our own.

BEGINNING CONCEPTS

- Creator
- Force
- Character
(Compassionate not Vindictive)
- Father/Son
Family Relationship
- Cross/Savior
- Holy Spirit
- Victorious, Reigning King



- Creature or DNA, Animal or Intelligent Creature
- Still a Failure at Life
 - Saved Redeemed at the Cross
- Bond-slave & Lordship
- Friend, Son/Daughter
 - Royal Priest
 - Overcomer
 - Devoted Follower
- Special Name Just for You

GOD

MAN

AFTER A LIFETIME OF REVELATION



Let's pray for those we know, praying for them to get saved, that first the Holy Spirit would come and they would understand.

Father, I thank You for stirring up our hearts to pray for the lost, whether in our families or people we know. You are calling them. We ask You, Lord, by Your Holy Spirit to come and begin to turn over the soil in their hearts, changing the concepts they have wrongly kept about themselves and God. And, they would begin to understand those concepts biblically, by the word of God, who You are and who they are. You are not a God who comes to just judge and leave. You are not a God of vindictiveness. Rather You are a God of compassion. Who wouldn't want to serve a God of compassion?! But You only, God, can turn over the soil of the heart so they would see the simple choice before them. And because of that choice, they would also understand You sent Your only Son, the Lord who died upon the cross, who took and sacrificed Himself physically that we might live spiritually. That they might grow in all the concepts You have called each one of us individually to be, to grow in the concept of knowing You and understanding You and the nature of our God in heaven. Lord, we've only begun to scratch the surface of who You are. When we all get to heaven we will all be surprised.

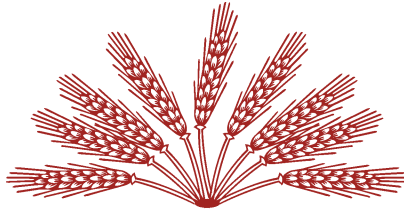
Thank you, Lord God. Amen . . .

1) Witness Tree/Gettysburg Address Honey Locust

This grand old tree stood in the Gettysburg National Cemetery near the spot where President Abraham Lincoln issued his famous "Gettysburg Address" on November 19, 1863.

Translations used: New King James and New American Standard

Cover illustrations from Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel



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