

“I Have Learned” Philippians 4:11

Paul is writing the letter to the Philippians from jail, likely in Rome. It is a powerful and encouraging letter calling for us to rejoice no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in. In our text we find Paul addressing contentment in his life. He has noted that he is content in whatever state he finds himself. There is much to say about that subject, but I want to focus on the phrase, “I have learned...”.

Learning is something we all need. In fact, we cannot survive without learning. Being brought into this world as infants totally dependent on others for survival, the fact that we are here today and able to care for ourselves is a testament to the fact that we have learned how to do that. With that in mind, I would like for us to consider, from a Biblical perspective, ways that we learn. This is a basic lesson, but I believe a good reminder for each of us.

I. Directly –

- a. By this I mean we learn by what we are taught and seek to learn. This is about schooling, reading books, listening to information, and seeking to process and apply it in our lives.
- b. What is God’s word?
 - i. 2 Peter 1:3 – within its pages we have *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”*.
 - ii. Romans 1:16-17 – it is God’s power unto salvation
 - iii. Hebrews 4:12 – It is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword
 - iv. Acts 20:32 – it is *“the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*
- c. 2 Timothy 3:14-15 - Timothy was commended because from childhood he had known the holy scriptures able to make one wise unto salvation.
- d. 2 Timothy 2:15 calls for us to study God’s word. Psalm 119:104 – through Your precepts I get understanding. 1 Timothy 4:13-16 – Timothy, as a preacher was to constantly read and study God’s word AND teach it to others.
- e. Ephesians 4:11-16 – leaders teach us and we learn so that we will not be *“tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...”*
- f. This is the primary way we are going to learn God’s will. In fact, this is the ONLY way we will ultimately learn what we need to do to be saved, to stay saved and hopefully help others to be saved as well.

II. By example –

- a. Example is a powerful teacher. In fact, much of who we are is based upon examples. Our speech, dialect, mannerisms, and even habits are often learned by those whom we have been watching and following the most.
- b. In some ways, example is more powerful than direct learning, because it opens doors to teach. In the work environment it is often how you learn what to do – you are assigned a mentor who will SHOW you what needs to be done.
- c. The Bible is full of examples of how we ought to live and NOT live.
 - i. From Abraham we learn the importance of faith – Hebrews 11:7
 - ii. We learn about patience and perseverance from Job – James 5:10-11
 - iii. We learn from Elijah the importance of prayer – James 5:17
 - iv. 1 Peter 2:21 – Jesus is our ultimate example of what it means to suffer

- v. John 13:15 – Jesus taught us about serving others
- vi. Philippians 2:5ff – Jesus teaches us what humility is
- vii. Philippians 3:17 – Paul gives us an example of how to live.
- d. 2 Timothy 3:10 – Paul commended Timothy noting he had carefully followed his example.
- e. 1 Timothy 4:12 – Timothy was instructed to be an example.
- f. 1 Thessalonians 1:7 – the Thessalonians became examples to those they impacted.
- g. 1 Peter 5:2-3 – elders are to lead foremost by example
- h. 1 Peter 3:1-6 – a wife can possibly convert her unbelieving husband by being a proper example.
- i. As we have noted in times past, we are all examples – whether good or bad, AND we are being watched by others. What do they see?

III. **By history –**

- a. We have heard the axiom, “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” History is an indirect form of example. And we can and SHOULD learn from it. Many of the problems we are facing as a nation now, AND as the church, could be avoided or minimized if we would take the time to learn from the past. Sadly, we are living in a generation that has little interest in such an undertaking.
- b. Several passages appeal to us to learn from history.
 - i. Romans 15:4 – the things written before were for our learning.
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 – Paul gives a few examples of rebellious Israel appealing to their history.
 - iii. 2 Peter 2:6 (Jude 7) – we learn how God feels about homosexuality by looking at the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- c. We just completed a study of Nehemiah. Several times in that book there is an appeal to history. NEHEMIAH 13:25-26 is one example as some of the people had (again) married foreign wives. Nehemiah strongly acted and then reminded them of their history with Solomon and how his many idolatrous wives turned his heart away from God (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-13).
- d. One reason we study Bible history is to learn what to do and what not to do.

IV. **By training in the home –**

- a. While a subset of examples, it is worthy of its own category. The home is the first institution of God, mentioned in Genesis 2:23-24. As the home goes, so goes society AND the church. This is a sad reality. It is very likely that children are going to follow in the footsteps of their parents, to some degree. Often, they enter the same profession, adopt similar mannerisms and lifestyle, etc. whether good or bad.
- b. The Bible is clear about the importance of the family. Consider:
 - i. Proverbs 22:6, *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*
 - ii. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – the responsibility that parents had to instill the LOM into their children. Much of Israel’s tragic history is the direct result of failures to do this.
 - iii. 2 Timothy 1:5 – Timothy’s genuine faith was found first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. 2 Timothy 3:15 – it was from childhood that he had known the scriptures.
 - iv. Ephesians 4:1-4 – children are called to obey and honor their parents. Fathers are to bring the up in the training and admonition of the Lord.
- c. 1 Timothy 5:3-4 – in later life, widows are cared for because children have first learned to show piety (respect) at home.

V. **By experience –**

- a. Experience is a great teacher. Provided we are willing to learn from it.
- b. Genesis 30:27 – Laban “learned by experience...” that being a friend of Jacob was good. This came after 14 years of Jacob’s service.
- c. Consider Peter – he denied the Lord 3 times – Luke 22:31-34, then 54-62. John 21:15-17 – is this the Lord restoring Peter? Looking at the life of Peter, we see that he learned from his failure and becomes a great advocate for Jesus. The same could be for Paul’s conversion.
- d. Our text – Paul had learned to be content. How? By the way he lived his life and what he had endured.
- e. Hebrews 5:8 – Jesus learned obedience by the things which He suffered.
- f. One of the great ways God has provided for us to learn is by experience. Will we? It is part of “growing up”.

VI. The Bible calls for us to learn

- a. Proverbs 1:5, *A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,*
- b. Proverbs 9:9, *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*
- c. Proverbs 16:23, *The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds learning to his lips.*
- d. 1 Corinthians 4:6 – *learn...not to think beyond what is written.* Respect God’s boundaries.
- e. Philippians 4:9 – *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.* What we learn we need to do.
- f. Titus 3:14 – *And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*
- g. 2 Timothy 3:7 speaks of those “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” Let that not be us.
- h. 2 Peter 3:18 – *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

VII. The other side of this – are you helping others to learn?

- a. Let us not forget that not only are we to be learners, but we are also to be instructors. Mark 16:15, Philippians 2:15, etc.
- b. While you may learn from these ways, you can also teach others in these same ways
 - i. You can engage in a study of God’s word with others.
 - ii. You need to be a godly example (Matthew 5:16)
 - iii. You can use your experiences to help you have an impact on others. Through experience you mature in faith and become better equipped to do your spiritual work.
 - iv. Your “history” is being made and will be remembered by others, especially how you deal with your past (cf. Philippians 3:13-15).
 - v. Finally, you can have the impact God desires within your home. Be the person God intends for you to be. If you have weaknesses, LEARN and improve.

Thus, we are reminded of the importance of learning. And of course, let us realize that no matter how much we have already learned, the learning must never stop. What about you? Have you learned what you need to be right with God? What are you doing with that learning? Think about it!