

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Pentecost Sunday 19 May - 10:30AM.
International Sunday and international food
Sunday 26 May - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Sunday 02 June - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Dr John Oakes (<https://evidenceforchristianity.org/>)
Sunday 14 July - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Kerry Mathurin

Learning to Learn



I was very impatient when learning to drive. I wanted to take as few lessons as possible. Partly because I wanted to drive without somebody else in the car (in my space!) and partly because I was an impoverished

student. After I passed my test, I enjoyed driving solo. However, I had no idea of how much more there still was to learn about driving. The first evidence was when I ran out of petrol on the M20 while driving my then-girlfriend to Dover Castle (Penny eventually forgave me!).

To follow Jesus is to take on the identity of a life-long learner. However much we learn about him this side of glory, we have only touched the edge of all we could learn. A disciple - the word *mathetes* means student - grows more and more into the likeness of Jesus (2 Cor 3.18). Our current church theme is 'a new creation' (2 Cor 5.17), and part of being a new creation is learning all that means. How does this happen, and why is it important?

1. The right goal

What is the goal of the Christian life? The goal is *not* to get to heaven. That might sound strange, so let me explain. The goal is to know God. Last Sunday, I saw an advertising board alongside the M25 which asked the question, "Where will you

spend eternity?" I appreciate that someone is trying to help people make a decision to seek God, but it's the wrong question. The right question is, "Who will you spend eternity with?" God is about relationship, not destination.

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3

2. The right person

Therefore, we want to learn about God so we can be love him and enjoy him. *"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."*

How do we do this? By learning as much as possible about our hero, Jesus.

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9

A passionate desire to know Jesus is what motivated the Apostle Paul to write,

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:10-14 NIV11)

Paul most certainly wanted to be 'in heaven', but it's because of *who* will be there. What is your goal as a Christian, as a disciple? Is it to stay in God's good books? Is it hoping that he will keep you healthy and all the people you care about will be saved? Or is it to be *like* Jesus and spend eternity *with* him? Our goal greatly influences our learning because it shapes what kind of learning we embrace or reject.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Shorter_Catechism

3. The right attitude

“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” Phil 4.11-12

Was Jesus discontent while on this earth? Not at all — unless you count the discontent he felt about the spiritual pride of some of the Pharisees! Jesus exhibited remarkable contentment despite being tired, hungry, thirsty and homeless (*Luke 9.58*). Paul learned a similar Christ-like contentment. How? Through being hungry and in need.

To learn Christ-likeness means having the right attitude when we experience uncomfortable and confusing times in life. Illness, war, financial and work difficulties, emotional and mental health disturbances, relationship bumps and other challenges are all learning opportunities. How do you know what God is trying to teach you? Look for the pain-points in your life. Those are your learning locations. When these times come, we ask ourselves how Jesus would think about the matter, and how he might support us. Then, keep your spiritual eyes open as to what you learn.

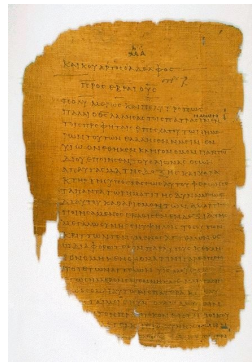
4. The right result

I use the word ‘result’ cautiously because learning about Jesus and growing into his likeness is not a science, nor something we can reduce to a formula — i.e. specific inputs = specific outputs. Relationships are not like that. However, when we have the right goal (person) and attitude, learning and growth will surely occur.

Archie’s sermon today comes from the Epistle to the Hebrews. In that letter, the writer comments on their lack of learning,

“In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!” (Hebrews 5:12 NIV11)

They could have learned to be teachers like Jesus — he was a teacher — but they did not. We do not know why, but we can be sure it was not for good



Opening paragraphs of Hebrews - Chester Beatty Museum p46 ca200AD

reasons! They needed to re-learn the basics. Let’s never be like that. It is unnecessary, unfortunate and unrighteous.

For reflection

- How do you feel about being a learner in Christ?
 - What do you sense God is teaching you at the moment?
 - How can you best cooperate with him?
- Your brother, Malcolm

Upcoming ICCM events

Dates	Retreat
Friday 26 th to Monday 29 th July	Preteen Camp
Saturday 27 th July to Friday 2 nd August	Teen Camp
6-8 September	Mature singles retreat
Fri 1 st to Sun 3 rd November (T.B.A.)	Autumn Student Retreat
Friday 22 nd to Sunday 24 th November	KK Coordinators & PTLs Retreat

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