

I Have a Dream

I have a dream! That one day words associated with “learning” the Bible will sound like this: “pleasant,” “joyful,” “great hobby,” “exciting,” “relaxing,” “growth-stimulating,” “lifelong passion” and “absorbing.” Why not us? Why not now?

An insight from recent learning studies has also helped me. How do learners best **retain** info so they can put it into practice? This realigns our learning theory with God’s creation-design. We learn in many ways. Rank these few with a “4” being the most effective way to learn and a “1” the least effective way.

- we *hear*,
- we *read*,
- we *do*,
- we also *pass-it-on* to another person.

Now, what percentage of learning in each of these methods do you think we **retain**? Give it your best guess. Make this active.

The Hebrew culture knew what we are only now relearning. Some studies show, and observation supports, that we retain around **5%** of what we hear, **10%** of what we read, **70%** of what we hear and do and **90%** of what we hear, do and pass on to others. Actively *listening* and *asking/answering* questions to one another with the commitment to put the learning into *practice* and pass it along to others is the model for natural learning, like Jesus taught.

Let’s make this concrete. Let’s say that a directive teacher is superb and holds us spellbound...a “100” on the scale of 1 to 100. What retention rate does this “listening only” style normally have? $100 \text{ times } 5\% = 5$ effective retention quotient. Now, let’s say I learn to teach naturally. Let’s also assume that I am a very mediocre teacher, say even way below average, a 40 out of 100. Since the retention rate is 90% for this style, what would this compute to? $40 \text{ times } 90\% = 36$ effective retention quotient. Learning with this mediocre teacher would be **seven times** more effective than just listening to a brilliant, directive preacher.

Ezra had committed himself to studying the Revelation of God, to living it, and to teaching Israel to live its truths and ways. (Ezra 7:10, The Message).

It's not accidental that experts are now discovering that Ezra tapped into a retention level of 90%. Ezra set his heart with a determined, lifelong effort (yes, learning takes effort)...

- to learn God's Word (read & listen, 5-10%),
- to live his life consistent with it (do, 70%), and then
- to give it away to God's people (pass it along, 90%).

High Leverage Learning

Wise learners find the maximum "*leverage point*" for change, that point where effort is rewarded with maximum return. With this in mind, based on the stats above, how would you design a learning plan if you wanted to maximize growth? We must rethink how God designed us to learn responsibly, especially in our information overloaded society.

What learning styles would you focus on? Jot down some ideas in the margin. How does this differ from what you have experienced in the past? What emotion does this emit? Hope? Excitement? Enthusiasm? Confusion? Fear? How does this compare with how you prefer to learn?

Our goal in studying together is not simply interaction to fill the air with words, but to build an environment of discovery, insight and application that changes lives. When people verbalize, they often expose gaps in their learning or training, gauge more accurately where they are on their journey, and are inwardly motivated to take steps to move towards ownership for change.

"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him his own" (Benjamin Disraeli, former British Prime Minister).

Why invest so much time and energy in such a low-leverage return as mere lecture? Break free from our outdated methods. Recapture high-leveraged learning. Ezra, one of God's leaders in the Old Testament, knew this centuries ago. How about you?