

Jesus Learned Naturally

Let's begin with a quick word-association game. Ready? Popcorn responses! What is the first emotion that comes to mind when you hear the words "school" & "learning." Yes, be honest!

For me, learning has always come easy...until we went to Germany to learn German as missionaries. I learned what it was like to come in each day and fail in a learning environment. Fortunately, I also experienced the power of community support from the ten others in class as they embraced me.

Some of you may have struggled regularly in school like I did to learn German. Think with me. Do you think the God who created us as lifelong life-learners created us to be educationally deformed? Jesus has answers, so let's start with Jesus.

Children Learn Naturally

This begins to make more sense when we look at the most natural and rapid time of learning in our lives. When do most people learn like wildfire? Two-year olds are incredible. I have twelve grandkids. It's so fun to watch them. How do two-year olds learn? Jot down a few quick thoughts before reading on. Active-learning stimulates growth.

- Life-related desires drive their learning (they learn to crawl because they want the toy just out of their reach).
- Questions are a normal and integral part of their young lives that we adults often get weary of answering... or even a bit irritated. "What's dat, daddy?" "Why?" "How long till we get there?"
- "Heh, Poppo, I know what! Let's play...!" prefaces a learning opportunity initiated by one of my grandchildren. A sense of wonder and joy, of playful enthusiasm and innocent curiosity, characterize what they do.

"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Jesus in Matthew 18:2).

Regarding learning, a child is characterized by *ignorance* and *inability*...and doesn't even care! In strong contrast, adults do all we can to cover up our ignorance and inability, and therefore shut down our creativity and stifle learning. "Each one teach one" by encouraging each member of the learning community to come as both a learner and as a teacher. An open learning community means we treat others with kindness and dignity, we listen and inquire, we learn to consider the views and values of others

Jesus Learned Naturally

We get the earliest glimpse of Jesus in the temple when He was twelve. How was Jesus learning as a young boy?

After three days [his parents] found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers (Luke 2:46-47, emphasis).

Jesus was *sitting* in a group and *listening* with an open heart and mind, *asking* honest questions, and *answering* questions with understanding as an active learner. A strong desire to learn fuels growth. Luke sketches out this simple model for natural learning and teaching that Jesus practiced. Both *listening* in a group learning setting with understanding and mutually *asking/answering questions* are within the reach of each of us. And how does this stack up with what you and I have experienced in learning?

The only time we cannot learn is when we forfeit our *listening hearts* as lifelong life-learners. "I can't" shuts our minds down and snuffs out creativity. "I wonder how we can..." unlocks the latent, God-given abilities within and opens up possibilities as agile, adaptable disciples. A *listening ear* prepares an *understanding mind* and a *responsive heart*.

Which of these traits apply to *active, natural learning* as we engage the Bible together in a group?