

LEARN IT, LIVE IT, GIVE IT

In anything that we learn to do well, there is a process for taking a skill from novice to proficient performance. This process begins with learning its basics, then practicing the performance of it, and finally teaching others the skill. This is the process for growing that any organization progresses through from its most basic groups to the whole organization. This process is fundamental to growth. A newborn first learns by observing and then attempting to do what he observes. A group of infants at the stage when they are taking their first steps follow the same process. The toddlers not standing or walking will observe those that are and attempt to stand and then walk themselves. The ones already walking will instinctively encourage those not walking to join them. Toddlers respond to encouragement and do best when parents or other toddlers lovingly coerce them. Now if this behavior is instinctive, why do adults have to be trained to perform the same function they instinctively used to learn as small children? The answer lies in another instinct that is characteristic only to human beings, ego. Ego is that factor which distinguishes man from animals. Ego is that self-awareness which began when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Only Jesus Christ was free of the curse of egocentrism. Egocentrism is a byproduct of the sin legacy passed to us by Adam. Notice that I did not include Eve when referring to the legacy of sin. Woman is not the source of sin; it is the human seed, which is found only in the male. This is why Jesus could not have had a natural father; He did not have the sin nature, as do all other members of the human race.

Basic to understanding how man learns is the role ego plays in his ability to assimilate information and then convert it into an effective skill. Man's intellect is far beyond and many times more complex than even the most intelligent animal, therefore teaching man is vastly different from that of training animals. Language skills alone put worlds between man and animals and this makes teaching even more complex for mankind. What one says may not be what the learner hears. Teaching is the most important job in the world and will never reach its epitome as long as there are more people to teach. The challenge will be the uniqueness of every human being and this is the wonder of the mind of the Creator.

As teachers of God's word, we may ask what skill we are attempting to teach. Traditionally, Christian education had been the center of the biblical teacher's purpose. Education focuses on the dissimulation of pertinent and useful information to the learner, however it puts very little emphasis on training the learner to become proficient in a skill per se. When we study the ministry of Jesus, we find a very unique teacher. Jesus not only informed his followers, He honed and tested their ability to live out the principles He was teaching them. This process takes teaching to a new level and makes understanding the learner critical in the process of discipling each convert. We want a changed and spiritualize lifestyle, not a brainwashed, mind-numbed robot that parrots pre-programmed rhetoric. What we want is a disciple who not only loves Jesus with all his heart but one who also loves his brethren and is willing to teach what he has learned in accordance with the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

The first step in the process is to *learn it*. The uniqueness of teaching a skill is to distinguish the information that is necessary to perform the skill

from subsequent actions, which make it effective. There is a vast difference between information and understanding. Information is data that may be accumulated and even recited but does not constitute understanding how to apply that data to some productive action.

The second step in the process is to *live it*. A student may learn all the math and science necessary to become an engineer but until that knowledge is applied to some particular engineering discipline, he isn't an engineer. In the same way we may learn all the scripture relative to salvation, healing, prosperity; but unless those principles are applied by believing and living as a believer, he has not effectively assimilated that knowledge into a lifestyle.

The third step in the process is to *give it*. This level takes any skill beyond knowledge and performance. When we understand God's principles for a prosperous and abundant life and then are able through our faith in His word to apply those principles to our own lives, we have still only traveled part of the way to discipleship. An effective disciple must live by God's word, but must also bring others into first, a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and then ensure that those new converts are in fellowship and growing in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is true Christian discipleship.