

“What Did Your Father Teach You?”

John 15: 9-17

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Fathers' Day

He taught me how to tie a fishing hook onto a line, water ski, grill a steak and play Rook. He taught me the value of a sense of humor and sense of direction. He taught me the importance of trusting people and being trustworthy. He taught me how to handle adversity and disappointment.

My dad taught me a lot of things, some I learned by listening and others by watching. I was fortunate to have him for thirty-two years. I wish it had been longer, though. At thirty-two, I did not know the questions to ask. I do now. So, the older I get, the more I miss him. I suspect you feel the same way if your dad is gone.

Evidently, Jesus' Father taught him a lot, too. Listen to his words recorded in the latter part of John 15:15, “Everything I learned from my Father, I have made known to you.” I find this verse reassuring and fascinating.

What impresses me is the humility of Jesus. The teacher is also a student and openly acknowledges it. I sense no arrogance on his part, only a hunger to learn so he can share more. I like that attitude.

I am also comforted by the relationship Jesus had with God. I sense it was based upon intimacy and respect. Jesus called God, Father, and obviously spent a lot of time with Him. I like this, too.

What fascinates me about this verse is the questions it raises. Let's examine some of them.

I wonder what Jesus learned from his heavenly Father? I think he learned about life and relationships. I believe he learned what was important and what was not, what was genuine and what was counterfeit, what to hold on to and what to let go.

I think he learned about his mission and purpose for being here, that he was to be the great physician, the good shepherd, the master teacher, the perfect role model and the sacrificial lamb. For you see, I think his Father taught him that there was a big difference between what He intended religion to be and what man made it. God wanted religion to be the building of relationships, both vertical and horizontal, that would help people achieve their potential. Man turned religion into following meticulous rules that burdened people and restricted creativity.

I think he learned what it meant to love imperfect people. His Father taught him that loving people would require patience, energy, sacrifices and determination. It would demand that he take risks, be misunderstood and get dirty.

I think he learned that nothing was more destructive than holding a grudge but on the other hand nothing was more liberating than forgiveness. His Father taught him that the best favor he could do for himself was to let go of bitterness.

I think he learned not to be surprised at who would disappoint him most, for it would be religious people. I think his Father taught him that not all religious people were good people and that power and greed could corrupt even the most pious.

I think he learned how to overcome hate and violence. His Father taught him that violence breeds violence and hatred breeds hatred. The way to conquer both is with love.

I think he learned that the best way to influence people was not to scare them but affirm and encourage them. His Father taught him to see hidden potential and cultivate it rather than see faults and condemn them.

I think he learned the difference between right and wrong and why it was best to do right. His Father taught him that each decision carried a consequence and that bad decisions would not produce good results.

I think he learned how dangerous it would be to play with the devil. His Father taught him that temptation was to be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly.

I think he learned the value of discipline. His Father taught him how important it was to control anger, selfishness, lust, pride and envy.

I also think he learned the value of gratitude, faith, hope and love. His Father taught him that the most powerful forces in life are unseen and internal. If he possessed these, he could move mountains.

I think he learned that the journey was as important as the destination. His Father taught him to live in the present and seize every opportunity to do good and help others.

I think he learned to trust his Father. His Father taught him that life was filled with mysteries that would demand faith. However, He assured him that faithfulness would be remembered and rewarded.

Yes, I think his Father taught him how to handle people, power, temptation, adversity, disappointment, surprises, confusion, anger, failure, victory and a host of other things. No wonder Jesus called Him Father.

How did he learn these things? I believe he learned them the same way any person would, through studying scripture, observing others, listening to wise counsel, reflecting upon experiences, and praying. I think his mind was always open to revelations from God. This is what made him a good student and better teacher.

What did he do with his wisdom and knowledge? He shared them with his disciples. “Everything I have learned from my Father I have made known to you” John 15:15b.

Why did he do that? He loved them. He cared deeply about them and wanted the best for them. He knew that God’s way was the best way. Obedience to his Father would bring them joy, peace and purpose. He wanted that for them, so, as friend to friend, he shared with them everything he learned from his Father.

I believe this is what it means to love another. When you love someone, you open your heart and mind to them and share with them what you have learned about life and relationships. Furthermore, you listen when someone you love has taken his or her time to share with you.

Jesus also shared his wisdom with them because he trusted them. He believed they would take what he taught them and share it with others. This was why he chose them and what he wanted them to do.

It is what he wants us to do, too, and he trusts that we will. I like what Arthur Gossip has written about this. “Life is full of mysteries, but as it proceeds, surely the most amazing thing in it is Christ’s unshaken trust in ordinary people.”

I also like what Stephen King wrote, “All that lasts is what you pass on. The rest is smoke and mirrors.”

In light of this, who needs you to share with them what you have learned from the Father about life and relationships? Can Jesus depend upon you to tell them? I hope so.

By the way, my father taught me one more thing. He taught me to trust Jesus. He encouraged me to look to him for wisdom and knowledge. He knew his Father would not mislead him just like mine would not deceive me. Without a doubt, that’s the most important thing he taught me. I hope your dad taught you that, too.