



TC's Thoughts for Discussion

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Jesus spoke in parables to the masses; Remember? In fact, He never shared any of the really important stuff with anyone until AFTER they had demonstrated "ears to hear." Why? Because he had just three years to accomplish his mission. If he had shared the important stuff with everyone – most of whom wouldn't have had "ears to hear" – it might have taken him 3,000 years to complete his critical assignment. Clearly, the efficiency of his sharing was as important as his message. So, how did he know when a person had acquired "ears to hear?" This is how:



Meteorologists confidently forecast stormy weather when barometric pressures fall. The lower the barometric pressure, the more intense the upcoming storm. That's because nature abhors a vacuum. Adjacent areas of higher air pressure rush frantically towards a low-pressure area in an effort to equalize the barometric pressure. That causes wind and other familiar weather phenomena.

When a person gets really, really curious about something he/she starts asking questions...questions that appear to arise from a burning way down deep inside. That's because human nature also abhors a vacuum. When those kinds of questions emerged from a person, Jesus knew he wouldn't be wasting his extremely valuable time in sharing critical information with him/her, because the TIMING was right: That person's listening efficiency was at its very highest point.

There were some notable occasions when Jesus used a brilliant technique for purposely YIELDING a piqued listening efficiency in people who didn't already have "ears to hear." His intentional encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well is an excellent example of that technique. That can be taught, coached, practiced and mastered. Shouldn't that sort of skill-building replace the currently observable emphasis on entertainment in the visible church? Shouldn't "To be like Jesus," be much more than the poignant words of a song? Shouldn't Christians be learning the METHODS Jesus used and mastering the skills he demonstrated for building the Kingdom? Isn't our time short, too?

Paul instructed the non-preacher believers at Ephesus and Thessalonica to put on the whole armor of God. This is the essence of his message to those two churches:

Put on...

- ① the Belt of **Truth**
- ② the Breastplate of **Righteousness**
- ③ the Shoes of **Practice** unto Readiness
- ④ the Shield of **Faith**
- ⑤ the Helmet of **The Hope of Salvation** —1 Thessalonians 5:8
- ⑥ the Sword of the **Spirit**, which is the Word of God
- ⑦ the Wisdom of **Alertness**

That prompts some really important questions. Here are three of them:

- A. Recall the story of David and Goliath? David refused King Saul's battle armor because it was heavy and awkward. That's because David hadn't **practiced** fighting while wearing it, as had Saul. Battle armor (even God's whole armor) would be too awkward and heavy for anyone who hadn't, first, become intimately familiar and comfortable with its collective weight and *feel* in **Practice**.
- B. How effective might one be in real conflict if one's **SHOES of Practice** Unto Readiness were clean, having never been worn in rigorous Practice? Have you ever worn shoes that hadn't been broken-in?
- C. How effective might one be with a SWORD if one has never used it in regular strenuous combat Practice exercises? How might one even effectively practice with it if one's knowledge of it is both passive and limited to what someone else has told one about it?

Unfortunately, it is not "practice" that makes perfect. Only "perfect practice" makes perfect. Roleplays in your church's "what 'we' believe" seminars and workshops are justly characterized as imperfect practice. For perfect practice you will want

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to align with a few other believers who'll resolve to separate denominational dogma from 1st-Century truth. Then and only then can you enjoy "perfect practice." Your **Shoes of Practice Unto Readiness** will get broken-in and really dirty, too – with regular exercises of **managed conflict** within your very special group. You will each grow in skill, spiritual muscle for bearing the weight of God's combat armor and in stamina—for *enduring to the end*.

If you've put on Christ's yoke, you must push against it, too. Without teamwork there is no work. Not only must we each be receptive to reciprocal instruction, correction and reproof (even occasional rebuke), but **we must actively cultivate such environments and relationships**. Otherwise we can gain no skill. Without skill there can be no perfect practice. Without perfect practice there can be no readiness. Without readiness soldiers in the army of the Lord grow lethargic and weak: The weight of God's armor causes weak soldiers to collapse even before any real combat begins. Even if those soldiers make it into combat, if their armor still feels awkward from lack of perfect Practice, they'll be quickly and easily defeated. It's easy to sing about being in the army of the Lord, but who will practice to learn how to fight effectively in the ranks of the real army of the Lord? You?

> "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." —Jesus, at Luke 14:33

We soldiers in God's army cannot afford to avoid conflict like the plague. If, like the proverbial old couple that claims to have never argued, we were to always avoid confrontation, none of us would be able to fulfill the mission of the church. Now, you may currently think that the assignment Jesus gave to the church was to get as many people "saved" as possible. That's enormously popular, I know, but it couldn't be further from the truth. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19,20 is about making DISCIPLES. Getting people 'saved' is an invention of post-Reformation clerics:

- (1) Preach.
- (2) Make Disciples of those who Believe.
- (3) Teach/Encourage each new Disciple to do the same.

There are BIG differences between Believers and Disciples. Believers can't fulfill The Great Commission. Disciples can. The visible church has made millions of Believers, but who's making Disciples? Can that be done from a pulpit? No one can "teach" a young child how to ride a bike. Kids learn how to ride bikes from patient COACHES. Shepherds can't produce sheep. Sheep produce sheep. Nobody can "make Disciples" from a pulpit. The making of Disciples is a "coaching" assignment to us all. Disciples are made one-at-a-time, by other Disciples, and that takes time. But where are the Coaches? You? If not, then you may want to gather a group of friends for regular Discipleship **Practice**. Sound like an impossible assignment? There's help: Visit www.DYPK.org/how-to-study. Share that info with a few of your friends as a preface to organizing for regular Discipleship skills practice. I did that. It worked. Still working!

It is unfortunate, at least, that most churchgoers think they're Disciples because they believe the Gospel message and are faithful in church attendance. Their pastors typically think they're fulfilling The Great Commission because they've filled their pews with Believers! But even devils believe (James 2:17-26), you know. To become a Disciple a Believer must fulfill "The Great Commission." That means to become a Student of, an Adherent to and a Teacher of the doctrines of Christ. (Your personal assignment may be to teach what you learn to just ONE other believer, so don't get nervous about all this; okay?)

Instruction, correction, reproof and occasional rebuke in THE Church are reciprocal. Instruction, correction, reproof and occasional rebuke in the visible church are, observably, the exclusive domain of the clergy. In THE Church, participants are actively involved in the process; not passively. The playing field is level! Each participant, aspiring to gain more knowledge and understanding and greater spiritual maturity recognizes and respects those others who may have advanced further than himself in the acquisition of either of those things. Their reciprocal interaction enables each one to...*be thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Timothy 3:17) and to...*make full proof of...his...ministry* (2 Timothy 4:5).

Preachers, please pay close attention: Neither can you advance in any of those critical disciplines unless you also submit yourself to reciprocal instruction, correction and reproof. Restricting that kind of collaborative interaction to your professional peer group and to organizationally superior clerics will stunt your growth...and theirs. That may sound like an unreasonable requisite for membership in The Church, I know. It will, in fact, be an impossible task for you...unless you will come to understand, first, that we laymen are not your subordinates. Many of us would readily interact with you as peers, to our mutual benefit, if you would be proactive in cultivating the **collaborative** environments and the relationships that encourage it. Or, you can choose to leave the driving to us...

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Yes, there are some core doctrines and principles and some critical truths on which we must agree in order to enjoy effective Christian labor and fellowship. Beyond those, though, I personally hope the **Bible Explorers Club**, LLC, will never opt for a "what 'we' believe" mindset. Why? My beliefs need to be challenged regularly. Yours do, too. Collectively, our spiritual growth would otherwise be stunted and we would become like the visible church—mere masters of marionettes.

—T. C. Newsome 

PS: Post a comment or ask a question: www.DYPK.org/contact.

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