



What will we learn this year?

It is always easier to believe in a Christ who is coming than a Christ who has arrived. Christ is here, that is certain. A new year is almost here, it's unfolding is not certain. As a boy, Jesus was in the temple, listening and asking questions. Where will we take our queries?

Luke 2:41-52 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Reflection

While I credit my mom with setting a great example of commitment to formal education, it is my dad whom I credit for teaching me to have a life-long love of learning. Dad's formal education stopped after high school, but learning through people and books became his lifestyle. As an adult he discovered the world of learning beyond his work and began to learn for the pleasure and satisfaction of it. Each week, he'd take our family to the public library, bringing home an array of books. From finance to history, biographies to gardening, he was always quietly learning and applying new information to his life.

After I finished a Master's Degree in my late twenties, I didn't want to crack open a book for years, especially non-fiction. *Why read if I didn't have to?!* While I enjoyed the field of my education, I was burnt out and happy to let my brain vegetate for a while.

Eventually I was drawn back to the

public library to the feast of subjects for my minds' delight. I became a voracious reader, typically reading 30 or more books a year. Learning is a joy. It is a privilege to have the freedom to learn and apply so many subjects to my life. All of these areas of knowledge are from God, after all, He is creator of all things.

In this section of Luke's Gospel, we see that Jesus stayed in the temple after his family was long gone. He was totally absorbed in his subject. He was excited to learn and to use his knowledge. When do you experience the excitement of learning?

God has given us a great gift in our human ability to learn and apply our knowledge. It is a key to improving our life and the lives of those around us. Scripture itself is a door to learning. It teaches us about humanity's life lessons and God's great answer to our needs. Allow God to lead your learning in the coming year.

Readings

Monday, January 1

Luke 2:39-52 Why do you think the Bible teaches that God's wisdom is much better to receive than material riches? Do your lifestyle priorities demonstrate this spiritual truth?

Tuesday, January 2

Mark 6:1-6; Proverbs 4:1-13 What are some of the most effective ways you can receive God's wisdom? What barriers keep you from listening to and learning from God's wisdom?

Wednesday, January 3

Matthew 11:25-30 How are you like the "wise and learned"? Like the little children? What have you learned this year?

Thursday, January 4

James 3:13-18; Proverbs 2:1-11 God's wisdom in our lives produces a variety of powerful qualities. What qualities in verse 17 would you like to develop in the coming year?

Friday, January 5

Luke 21:5-19; Proverbs 12:18 When we live as faithful followers of Jesus, God provides us the right words of wisdom at the right time. Describe a time when God clearly provided you (or someone you know) the right wise words.

A disciple is a life-long learner.
How will you learn and grow from the life of Jesus in 2007?

1. Regularly attend worship — Worship honors God, who is worthy of our praise. Worship reminds us that life is not about us. Life becomes more balanced. We grow in respect and understanding of God. Invite others to worship with you.

Consider: In what ways might I better prepare myself for Sunday worship? How can I worship God each day on my own?

2. Read the Bible and pray daily — As we grow in our day-to-day relationship with Jesus, our faith matures and we are better equipped to follow Him. We apply God's Word to our everyday lives. Study materials are provided each week to go along with the sermon themes. This is a good place to start your reading. Use this material in conversation with your family.

Consider: How many days of the week will I read and think about the daily scripture? What will help me stick to my plan? If I make my prayers as simple as conversation, what would I say to God and how would I listen to His response?

3. Participate in a small group — We need God and we also need His people! Through community with "the Body of Christ" we learn how to live and love as Jesus did. Our application of God's Word accelerates when we meet with other believers and build Christian friendships. This provides a place to talk about our challenges as we learn to live out a life of faith. Be part of one of the 6-week small groups offered throughout the year, or join an ongoing group. Invite others to join a group with you.

Consider: In what kind of small group would I be comfortable? How can I build Christian friendships?

4. Give a portion of what God has given to you — All that we have comes from the Lord. What we give — our time and resources — is our response to His great love and provision. Giving is a privilege. We become part of the Almighty's plan to bring hope and help to the world for now and eternity.

Consider: How and why has God blessed me? How can the resources I have bring hope to others? What do I have that I can give for God's kingdom?

5. Use your spiritual gifts to serve God — God provides our gifts and talents not for ourselves, but for the sake of others. Every member has a place in our ministry. We are the "priesthood of all believers." We are servants, rather than volunteers. Using your time and abilities for God is spiritually fulfilling. Serve with joy, and be healthy and well-balanced in your choices.

Consider: What gifts and talents is God asking me to use for His service at St. John? What might I be willing to explore?