

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 10, 2011

What Is It All About? -- Growing Up In A World Set Against Us

by Dan Trygg

"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding."

Proverbs 4:7

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by [wisdom] your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it."

Proverbs 9:10-12

General Picture of Growth

We all start out in life not knowing anything. We are totally dependent on others to care for us. They have to feed us, change us, keep us warm and protected, or we simply would not survive. The fact that we are here today is a testimony that there were others who were in our lives to care for us during this time of dependence. The primary jobs of a newborn is to survive (mostly *eat*) and learn. As we grow, through our experiences with the world around us, we develop an understanding of reality, ...expectations of the world and people, that provide a framework for our ongoing development and exploration. (Can you imagine how significantly these expectations of the world can affect that life, going forward?) The primary job of a toddler is to explore. It has been observed that a human child learns 50% of all it will ever learn by its first birthday, and 75% of its total life-long knowledge by the time it is two years old. That may seem a bit unreal, but when you consider the incredible feat involved in discovering how to make our bodies work for us, and to begin to interact with the world, even to learning the rudiments of basic speech, the developments of those first two years of life are, indeed, staggering. It would be akin to programming a computer with its basic operating system. All other additional "programs" are built upon that basic foundation. There are still huge amounts of growth to be mastered, but the first two years are explosive, compared with the modifications and additions of future learning.

From the early childhood years, with the sharpening of language and motor skills, the ability to ask questions, read and learn from others, we continue to grow at an incredible rate. We are still developing basic understandings of the world, learning new skills, as well as fine-tuning our understanding and honing the skills we have. **During this time in our lives, there is a general move from dependence to independence.** We are learning to be separate, functional individuals from our parents, being trained to be capable, responsible people in society, ...first in our family, then in the larger world. The goal, which we feel inside of us, and which is communicated to us in multiple ways, is that **we are being "brought up", educated, trained, etc. to "be on our own" someday. This encompasses a wide range of skills**, from domestic skills (personal hygiene, keeping our rooms clean, cooking, etc.), job skills (capability to follow instructions, responsibility, general and specific knowledge, etc.), social skills (ability to communicate and get along with others), and economic/civic skills (paying bills, abiding by the law, etc.). **We go through many episodes of testing, exploring, and even rebelling, in order to develop our own sense of identity, to "find ourselves", so to speak.** One significant insight to help us in this time is that it is *not* merely *what we know* that is important, it is our ability to *utilize what we know* that becomes crucial. **As we develop abilities, we are called upon to be responsible (ability = able to respond to situations = "response-able")**, that is, to use our abilities to accomplish *expected* or *needed* tasks. This requires a development of *self-control* and *initiative* on our part. We need to learn when to limit ourselves, as well as when to "step up to the plate" to do our part in a given situation. We continue to grow, and make adjustments, in the practical understanding and skills in these areas for the rest of our lives. ***If we fail to develop any of these basic skills, we will struggle to succeed and prosper in life, and our personal potential will be stunted.***

There is another dimension to our growth, which to some degree happens alongside of our developing self-awareness and independence, but which calls for a whole other set of skills. This is the ability to work and relate interdependently with others. Starting from the manners we learn in childhood, the lessons in sharing and taking turns, etc., which are reinforced in elementary school, and moving through experiences of teamwork, group projects, dealing with co-workers and employers, etc. **Interdependence is a reality of human life which we deal with almost every day.** Our lives intersect and impact others, and theirs affect ours. Many of us simply learn how to get along, and pretty much "live unto ourselves" as much as we can. Part of this is simply our own immaturity and self-centeredness, and part of it is fostered by the myth of "rugged individualism", which tells us that the strong person can go it alone, and doesn't need anyone. Unfortunately, that is not consistent with what God has made us to be. Even secular psychology and the business world can recognize that learning to interact in a healthy and productive manner with others is a further step in our personal development, and requires new levels of self-control, self-assertion, as well as more skill. Healthy relationships require that we develop these skills, especially if we want these relationships to

grow. It has been observed that **the ability to work interdependently with others is dependent upon a healthy sense of self. If you are not comfortable with yourself, who you are, your ideas, etc., you will not be able to work well with others.** You will tend to either give way to others too much, ...or be overbearing, ...or you will simply withdraw. In order to be *able* to work as a team with others means we need to discover and know ourselves. To further complicate that statement, think on this: Sometimes we *can't* accurately see or discover ourselves except in the context of interrelationships. There is no simple evolutionary process here. We must work in *both* areas, but our independence-skill and level of self-comfort will affect our ability to function with others. **The beauty of healthy interdependence is that when we interact in a healthy, productive manner with others as a team, a synergy can begin to develop.** This fosters a creativity which builds from the strength of many people, instead of just the contributions of a number of isolated individuals. **We are able to do more together than we could ever do as individuals. Again, if we fail to develop skills of interdependent interaction, we will miss our full potential.**

God Has a Purpose For Us

In addition to this general overview of human development, **God has designed you with specific abilities, giftedness, and potential which He wants to develop for His Kingdom purposes.** He *alone* knows the real potential of our being. You don't know it. Your parents, and others who know you, do not know it. They may see parts of that potential, but they do not see the whole picture. Only God Himself knows. **He created us, loves us, and wants to help us become all that we can. Walking with Him will fulfill us and give us joy.** Furthermore, unlike the messages we may hear from the world around us, God tells us that **our existence is *not* simply about the here and now.** There is a much bigger picture than what we can see with our own eyes. **He is preparing us for greater things.** Some of these have to do with His Kingdom work here in this world. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He will bring into our lives that we might walk in them (Eph. 2:10). **We have work to do here,** which He has been preparing us for. **In addition, He has revealed that we are to be princes and princesses to reign over portions of His Kingdom** (Rev. 5:10; 20:6). That means we need to become like Him in our character, so we will be good and just servant-rulers, and we need to become wise, so we will know how to run our portions of His Kingdom well. (Think for a moment: If you knew you were destined to be a ruler, responsible for a *nation*, would that affect how you saw yourself? Would it impact what you would do *in preparation* for that calling?)

Other Agendas For Us

God's plan is not the only one out there. **Other things work to influence us in ways that steer us away from God's best for us.** Three basic sources of negative influence are: (1.) The World; (2.) The Flesh; and, (3.) The Devil.

(1.) The World -- This includes not only the programming we receive from the people and culture around us, which can misguide us, but also the wounds and assaults from people, experiences, and the political/economic system that can cut into us, and sometimes even directly oppose us. These can hinder us, block our way, or send us reeling.

(2.) The Flesh -- This is the Biblical term for the self-interested tendency to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and protect oneself. A continuum ranging from normal, natural, healthy pleasures and self-protection to the inordinate extremes of ultra-pleasure-seeking, on the one end, and to ultra-self-protectionism prompted by fear, on the other side.

(3.) The Devil -- We are dealing with more than simply having to control our selfishness, or choose to live in a way that is different from those around us. We have a foe who is consciously, intelligently, actively working to attempt to keep us from finding and fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

God warns us of another danger in this area of self-fulfillment. It is the danger of *self-management*. Many people believe that they can come to know who they are, and can develop themselves to come to personal fulfillment. God has told us that we are incapable of this (Jn. 12:25; Mt. 10:39). Why? Because we are limited in our understanding, and because our selfishness will keep us from pushing ourselves in ways that are necessary to develop us, but are momentarily unpleasant. **We need God as our Creator-Coach to lead us through the paces that are necessary for us to become all we can be.**

So, given these forces are working against us, what will happen if we just kind of "cruise through life"? What will the outcome be? Going with the flow will not work; ...the "flow" will pull us over the waterfall!! **How can we discover and follow God's plan for us?** What is required? **We must commit to live *intentionally*.** We must determine to **watch for God's leading and invest in resources, opportunities and experiences that will grow us up.** **We should especially develop relationships of growth and accountability with other Christians.** God wants the Body to build up the Body, as we express the truth to one another in love (Eph. 4:15,16). **We are the instruments God desires to use to admonish, encourage, counsel and support one another, so that we come to maturity** as people in Christ (Eph. 4:12-16; Heb. 10:24,25). **This is His plan, His strategy.** It requires love, honesty and radical obedience to the Spirit's leading. It forces us to get practical, to get real, to go against the flesh, to take risks, to walk in faith.