

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: September 8, 2013

Learning New Skills

by Dan Trygg

“We are no longer to be children...”

Ephesians 4:14

“Therefore My people go into captivity for lack of knowledge, their honored men are dying of hunger, and their multitude are dried up with thirst.”

Isaiah 5:13

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you...”

Hosea 4:6

“Therefore, girding-up your minds for action, being sober... ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts in your ignorance...”

I Peter 1:13,14

“...in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, ...²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which has been created in the likeness of God ...”

Ephesians 4:22-24

A friend of mine was out for a jog the other evening. He was praying about a particular person he knows, and was wondering how to help him. He was asking God for insight, or understanding. Suddenly, he noticed a baby bird flopping around on the ground. Apparently, it had fallen out of its nest, and it didn't know how to fly. It stopped, and just sat there, chirping. My friend knew it would not last long, if it remained on the ground like that. Either it would get cold at night, and die, ...or it would draw the attention of some predator, and it would become easy prey. As he drew nearer, it either could hear him, or possibly saw him coming. It panicked, and started flapping and fluttering for all it was worth. He was only a few steps away, when it finally began to get off the ground. It started out kind of wobbly, but in a few moments flew away in a graceful arc, like an old pro. This was probably its first real attempt at flight. It took a few moments to get its bearings, and figure out how to control its motions to do what it wanted, but once it got that worked out, it was off in a flash, away from danger and on to a whole new existence.

All of this took only a matter of seconds to transpire, but it was amazing to watch. Suddenly, **the Lord revealed to him that the person he was praying about was like that young bird.** In fact, **every Christian has as dramatic a paradigm shift to make as that bird did, ...or he or she will never learn to live in the fullness of life in the Spirit.** All that this bird knew, from the time it was hatched until the moment it fell out of the nest, was limited to the confines of the nest. Its life had consisted in sitting in the nest, calling out to mom or dad, and waiting to be fed. All it knew of the world was limited to what it could see, hear or feel from the vantage point of the nest, and the little samples and tastes that its parents brought back to him. **When it fell out of the nest, it fell into a strange, new world that was very different.** Instead of being warm, confined or crowded together with its siblings, it was suddenly out in the open, ...alone! **The old rules did not apply here.** Just calling out to mom and dad did not bring immediate help. **The new sights, sounds and textures were overwhelming** it with sensory overload. It looked *stunned*, ...almost like **it was tired, and wanted to go to sleep.** If it *had*, my friend knew *it would have not made it through the night.*

All at once, it could hear my friend's footfalls, and **it was roused to action.** It tried doing *everything* it *could* to escape this threat. **It tried new things. It tried moving new ways, and stepped up the activity level.** When it began to move, *it did not stop*, even though the movement was strange and scary. The impending danger was *scarier!* **In all the experimentation, effort, flapping and moving, it began to discover and learn the skills of flying.** In a matter of seconds, it began to rise from the ground, discovered how to steer and turn, and moved away. **Here is the take-away for us: All the capabilities and potentialities for flight were already present that morning. What made the difference was learning, experimenting, repeatedly putting forth effort, not giving up.** Through trial, error, observation and experimentation, it discovered how to harness that potentiality and do things it had never done before.

When we give our lives to Jesus Christ, and are born from above, we also have an entirely new and different set of possibilities available to us. We have a new inner person, made in the image of God, that is our new identity, our new self. *Yet, we can still live out of our old patterns of living, our old mindset, our old self.* **God's Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us, to enable us to live in ways we never could before.** He can *empower us* to live in victory over sin. *His activity* in our lives can change our character and attitudes about life. He can *give us power* to operate in spiritual gifts, supernaturally produced abilities that go *way beyond* our natural abilities. *Yet, we can still choose to disregard His power and presence in our lives. We can choose to live by our old fleshly orientation, and live on strictly a natural level.* Because of our relationship with Christ, **we can not only be free from demonic dominion, we can take authority over evil spiritual powers and expel them in Jesus' name.** We can do battle against evil spiritual beings, and defeat them. *Yet, we also can remain under the deception, control and domination of demonic powers, if we do not know and exercise our spiritual authority.* **We have a spiritual calling**

and destiny that God intends for us, a purpose for our lives that will be fulfilling, rewarding, and will bring Him great honor. *Yet*, we can continue to live the *self-centered lives* we lived in the past, and *miss* God's purpose for our lives. **Bottom line: We can live as we did before we knew Christ, ...or we can discover and walk in the new life Christ intends for us.** We can be like that bird on the ground, chirping out our complaints, or we can *believe* that it is possible to live differently, and set about to learn to "fly".

There are so many who hear the gospel message, and profess to believe it, but never seem to change, ...or there may be a temporary change, and then they either fall back into old things, or they just seem to get stuck. **What is going on?** They *say* they believe, but *they either did not get the whole message*, and their perception of following Christ is misguided, ...*or, the faith that they have is not deep and strong enough to provoke them to pursue the new things God has made available to them.* Birds in the nest, and birds on the ground are no different, if all they do is chirp and hop around. They are missing out on the wonder of the potential life God has placed within them.

We are supposed to grow up. We are *supposed to* mature, to come into adulthood. **What does spiritual adulthood look like?** It consists of those things I mentioned above: victory over sin in your life; becoming like God in your character; experiencing and expressing the fruit of the Spirit in your life; discovering, developing and using spiritual gifts; experiencing more of God's power and presence in your life; recognizing and defeating demonic oppression and opposition in your life and others; finding and walking in God's will for your life. Look at Galatians 5:19-21, or James 3:14-16. **If you are still experiencing those character defects or emotional issues** mentioned there, **you need to understand that you are not walking in maturity in Christ.** If you still have outbursts of anger, or jealousy, or you are argumentative and hold grudges, or if you are living in sexual sin, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexual relations (I Cor. 6:9,10) or even pornography or lust, then you are living your life from the flesh, not the Spirit, at least in those areas of struggle. **It doesn't matter how long you have been a Christian, or how much theology you know.** Don't think you are spiritually mature, if you still living with bitterness or unforgiveness, or if you drink in excess or use mood-altering drugs. **Maturity is marked by clear mindedness and self-control.** People who are spiritually mature are characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. **They are reasonable, approachable, full of mercy and good fruits;** they are not wishy-washy or hypocritical. **Their lives are characterized by goodness, helping others, serving others.** They are gracious and hospitable. They don't judge others; they accept them where they are, and try to come alongside to help them, if they need help. **Now, none of this is meant as a judgment or as condemnation. It is meant as a reality check.** It is like checking your pulse. If we are following the leading of the Spirit, we *will* become more like Jesus. If we are following the flesh, we will see what the flesh produces. **The point is, we are supposed to grow up. We can grow up. There is a whole new, joyful, liberating life waiting for us, if we will do what it takes to discover it.**

So, what is the problem? In the passages at the top of this study, the problem is lack of knowledge, lack of understanding. We can't apply what we don't know. We can't make changes if we don't know what changes to make, or how to make them. Let me say, however, that this is not some religious self-help program. **The knowledge we are looking for is more than simply a knowledge of right from wrong.** Knowledge of upright morality or good behavior is not the answer in itself. The Jews tried that, and it didn't work for them. They tried to keep the Law that God Himself gave them, and they found it was not possible. If we try to "be good" by our own efforts, we will fail, because *we* can't do it. Sin, which is still within us, will rise up and cause us to fall (Rom. 7:7-25). No, the knowledge we are looking for is deeper and more profound than that. **We do need to know and understand God's standards of morality and righteousness to be able to more clearly recognize good from evil, because the enemy is good at cloaking evil with an appearance of acceptability.** Evil is evil. It is *never* good, or acceptable. God's moral standards do not change. It is important that we don't become fooled by the enemy's propaganda that would question God's ways and standards.

The knowledge we are looking to discover is the insight to bring about a paradigm shift. We need a change of perception. **We need transformative knowledge,** knowledge that unlocks the metamorphosis of a Spirit-filled life. **Where do we find this knowledge? Jesus said that it was to be found by abiding in His word.** Paul said that the place to look is the written Scriptures, the collection of books inspired by God (II Tim. 3:14-16). Peter says these are not produced by human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (I Pet. 1:20,21). (I was talking with someone the other day, and we were remarking on how difficult it is to get people to read the Scriptures. Satan doesn't want them to understand God, His plan or His ways, or His provision in Christ.) Then, like the bird in the example above, **we need to apply this knowledge. We need to test out by trial to discover what works, and how it works** (Rom. 12:2). We need to *make choices* to put off the old ways and the old orientation of the flesh, and *choose* to call out to God, *refocus our attention* on His Spirit within us, and *ask Him* for His heart and His attitude, ...and then *act* in accordance with that.