

Sermon Notes for July 24th

How deep is our learning & understanding?

Introduction:

Last Sunday we had a brief discussion about learning and the topic of rote memorization came up in our study of Isaiah, Sam's class, and the discussion really got me thinking, not just about the problems our kids may have if their learning, or teaching, doesn't move beyond rote memorization but the problems we have if our faith, when our faith, is a product of rote memorization. The point was made that rote memorization doesn't create understanding and I really think that's the problem. The problem isn't rote work in the process of learning but that too often rote work is the only learning, or more accurately teaching, taking place.

We need to define some terms before we go on here to make sure we are all on the same page:

Rote: a set, mechanical way of doing things, by memory without thought of the meaning,

Learn: gain knowledge or skill, memorize, find out, come to know, become able by study or practice,

Understand & Understanding: get the meaning, know how to deal with, be informed, take as a fact, believe, supply in the mind / comprehension, knowledge, to learn and know, intelligence, intelligent and sympathetic (having kind feelings towards others, approving agreeing),

Rote work is learning; it represents learning in the form of memorization, usually. From an educators' perspective, rote work is an effective way to create fluency in students and fluency is a key to comprehension. The problem is, rote work usually doesn't lead to understanding and too many times teachers don't go beyond rote work and assess the repeating of facts as representing deep learning and understanding.

That got me thinking about my faith. Do I have a faith that is ROTE?

- I can regurgitate biblical facts with the best of them, does that make me a faithful child of God?
- I have memorized scriptures, does that mean I can know what God is telling me or that I even care?
 - Consider John 3:16... Remember the rainbow wigged guy at all the major sporting events years ago holding up the John 3:16 sign...
 - Do we really know what this is saying, John 3:16?
 - Why do I get a tear in my eye every time I see a dead kitten along the road... but I don't when I read, or hear, John 3:16, because I don't get it, I don't understand, I haven't learned enough, been changed enough, **YET**...
 - I'm not trying to suggest that we have to weep every time we hear John 3:16 but I do think it will touch our hearts every time if we truly understand it...
 - Joe Jirsak, would do it all again, (WWII Vet)... How is God's Son's death on a cross less meaningful than that...
 - Another example would be our weekly feast, what goes through your mind? Do you remember? What does it mean to you?
 - Why do you think that God tells us to pray for wisdom?

Wisdom: having the knowledge and coupling it with good judgment. The good judgment comes from experience and that is why we often associate wisdom with age. In James 1:5 we are all encouraged to ask God for wisdom. James also talks about a wisdom that comes from above in chapter 3:17 so we see that there is worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom. We need to seek Godly wisdom from God.

Body:

I would like us to revisit a story today that I shared with you almost 3 years ago now about Peter's denial of Jesus. As I thought about this story I wondered if the difference we see in Peter reflects his learning? I think it does, this is a story about a man growing in his knowledge and understanding of God and his savior Jesus Christ. This is the experience where Peter's learning becomes wisdom, Godly wisdom. We see the change from a worldly wisdom to a

heavenly wisdom. Peter's faith changed from a rote faith to a faith that changed a world.

Peter's Fall: John 18:1-27, Luke 22:61-62

Peter's Reinstatement: John 21:15-18, the key to this passage and our understanding of it is to realize that Jesus changed the question.

Conclusion:

Why aren't we the change agents that God commanded us to be? (Matthew 5:13-14 & 28:18-20) The only reason is because we haven't **YET** been changed ourselves. It's because we have a rote faith.

- This is a great place to start, today the invitation comes in the form of this question. What is the next step in your learning?
- James described rote Christians in his letter and he gave us this advice to go beyond a rote faith: James 1:22-25

Remember that real learning comes from a variety of experiences (ways) with the facts and a multiplicity of experiences (times) so that there are significant opportunities to practice and become engaged with how the facts, God's truth, define and explain life. We have to have this in order to experience the value of the facts, to make them relevant, or we won't care about them enough to retain them and especially to put them into practice.

- Are we putting God's facts/truths into practice?
- Do they define us?
- Do they give us direction?
- Does our example make a difference for others?

When Peter understood all that Jesus meant, really understood, he was a changed man and he helped change a world.

Just because you can quote Acts 2:38 doesn't mean you're a christian...