

Learning to be Teachable

John 14:6–11 (NKJV)

⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

⁷“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

⁸Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

¹¹Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

- *Philip and the other disciples had been with Jesus since the beginning of His ministry, almost 3 ½ years, yet Jesus gently rebuked him, asking, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?”*
- *Jesus taught through the words He spoke, the way He lived, the miracles He performed, and the love He had shown to each one of them. However, for some reason they failed to understand much of what He desired to convey to them.*
- *Jesus, as God the Son, had continually lived out a life filled with love, devotion, and obedience to God the Father. He wanted His disciples to come to that same wonderful loving relationship with the Father through their relationship with Jesus. However, they failed to grasp the reality that Jesus is the Son of God and that He and the Father are One.*
- *Similarly, many Christians who have been believers for many years, regularly read the Bible, pray, and attend church continue to harbour resentment and unforgiveness in their hearts. They continue to make ungodly lifestyle choices. Consequently, their lives are devoid of spiritual growth and the fruit of the Spirit in their character. There is no evidence of spiritual fruit in their lives. One reason for this lack of spiritual progress may be that they have not yet learned to be teachable.*
- *The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews confronted the Jewish believers with the same issue of lack of spiritual maturity and spiritual growth—“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” (Hebrews 5:12). They had been believers for a sufficient length of time that they should have grasped the elementary principles of the faith and have been able to instruct others in the faith.*
- *The writer of Hebrews desired to convey some of the deeper truths and revelations contained in the Word of God regarding the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ but they*

were unable and unprepared to understand. In fact, during their time as believers they had actually grown duller and more stubborn. “And having been perfected, He (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” (Hebrews 5:9-10).

- *The Greek phrase “become dull of hearing” literally means “lazy to one’s ears” speaking about being slow to understand with the implication of laziness. Their unpreparedness to be able to learn the deeper truths of God’s Word stemmed from either disinterest or an unwillingness to respond to the things they had already been taught, or selective hearing, only willing to hear what they wanted to hear.*
- *With an increase of knowledge and understanding comes a responsibility to apply it to our own lives (wisdom). If someone does not want to change or acknowledge their failures and struggles they will resist hearing correction and instruction. That is why the writer of Hebrews chastened them for “becoming dull of hearing.”*
- *The purpose of going deeper into the Word of God is to develop a righteous life that will glorify Christ and to be spiritually mature so that we can discern truth from error and righteousness from unrighteousness. “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:13-14).*
- *When we are teachable, correctable, and accountable, we will grow and mature spiritually. Many of our spiritual and emotional struggles will diminish or vanish.*
- *The psalmist made an interesting and rather surprising statement—“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.” (Psalm 119:71). He recounted a time when he failed and it produced suffering or hardship in his life. Rather than belittling and condemning himself for his bad decisions, blaming others, or ignoring his failures, he responded in a very positive way—“it is good for me.”*
- *When we fail we must not allow the enemy to heap fear, shame, condemnation or self-hate on us. We need to come to Jesus and confess our sins, receive His generous forgiveness, turn away from our failures and turn toward God so we can learn what He wants to teach us from our mistakes or failures so we can continue to learn, grow, and mature.*
- *Being teachable and correctable is the difference between our failures being a source of fruitfulness or destruction.*
- *“If we are teachable our failures become lessons. If we are unteachable our failures become defeats.” — Leonard Terry*

- *“If we learn from our mistakes, we turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones.” — Shirley Howson*
- *A person who is not teachable or correctable will continue to repeat their past mistakes and failures, with increasingly severe consequences.*
- *If we see our failures as an opportunity for growth where God can teach and correct us, then we will actually benefit from them.*
- *If we are teachable and correctable then our response to our failures will be one of thanksgiving to God. Jesus shed His blood at Calvary so we could be forgiven, so He could bring redemption, and use our failures to bring godliness and fruitfulness in our lives. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28).*
- *God will use our failures and our victories as opportunities to teach and mature us if we are humble and willing to learn and be corrected.*
- *“He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5). If we are not humble and teachable even our victories can become defeats because the flesh can rise up in pride and self-exaltation because of what we think we have done. We need to recognize that we can do nothing without God and everything we do that produces eternal fruit comes from God.*
- *“No matter how many times we do something with God we can never do it without Him.” Joe Lehman*
- *Being correctable and teachable will produce authentic Christianity. We will grow and become more and more like Jesus in our actions, words, and even thoughts.*
- *“There are two kinds of Christians; those who sincerely believe in God and those who, just as sincerely, believe that they believe. You can tell them apart by their actions in decisive moments.” In God’s Underground, by Richard Wurmbrand.*
- *Humility and the fear of the Lord are two essential components to having a teachable heart. “By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life.” (Proverbs 22:4).*
- *“You can know when people are not teachable when they say I will do anything but... It is the “but” that they need to do.” Harvey Katz*
- *A person who is teachable and accountable is one who is willing to listen and consider correction even when it is contrary to what they want to hear.*

⁸ Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.

⁹ Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

- *One of the biggest problems when we are not teachable is that we fail to recognize that we are not teachable.*
- *David had many failures and sins from committing adultery to murdering an innocent and loyal man. However belatedly, David's heart was humble and contrite when confronted with his sins. He had a correctable and teachable heart when it came to his failures. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight." (Psalm 51:2-4a).*
- *After David sinned and experienced the painful consequences of his actions he did not hide but asked God to cleanse his heart—"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51:7-10).*
- *David wanted God to use his failures and sins to teach others how to walk in righteousness and avoid committing the sins he had committed. "Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You." (Psalm 51:13).*
- *Being teachable and correctable does not just deal with immorality or other blatant sins, but can simply refer to being open to having a change of perspective that reflects the reality of God's Word.*
- *Many times we can struggle with the day to day worries of life. Learning and understanding the brevity of life puts all those worries and temporal successes and disappointments into their proper perspective. "LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor." (Psalm 39:4-5).*
- *Three things to evaluate your life by:*
 - *The reality of your mortality*
 - *The return of Christ*
 - *The fear of the Lord*
- *Whatever we are experiencing whether pleasant or unpleasant we need to ask the Lord, "What do You want to teach me in this? or "What can I learn through this experience and journey?"*
- *Jesus wants to teach us to live a life free from the worries, fears, and crushing burdens of life. However, He doesn't do that by insulating us from every unpleasant event but by*

calling us to Himself so that we can learn from Him. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30).

- *The first step to learn how to enter into the rest that Jesus promises is to hear Him calling. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” We will only be able to clearly hear His voice when we come to Him in prayer.*
- *As we spend time in prayer God can teach us many things. Without a developed prayer life we will find that many things Jesus wants to teach us we will be unable to learn.*
- *The second step is to learn to take the heavy yokes that are crushing us and give them to Christ as we surrender our lives and all our cares and problems to Him, “casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7).*
- *Some things we need to learn require the help of other Christians who can encourage us and walk with us as we learn to give those heavy burdens of life to Jesus.*
- *The third step is to learn to exchange our heavy yoke for the yoke God offers us. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.”*
- *To give our yoke over to Christ does not mean we have no further responsibilities or requirements. However, what He is asking us to do and carry out will neither destroy nor crush us, “for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*
- *As we study God’s Word we learn which yokes we are to carry and how to carry them.*
- *To take our heavy burdens and worries and give them to Christ in exchange for His yoke is a learning process. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.”*
- *How do we know when we are carrying His yoke or our yoke? Simply by asking, “Are we burdened down with the problems and worries of this life or do we have a deep inner joy independent of the circumstances we face?” Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*
- *What does the light yoke that Christ wants us to carry look like?*
- *It looks like thanksgiving. “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*
- *It looks like joyful obedience. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3).*
- *It looks like trusting in God’s faithfulness. “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” (John 14:1).*

- *It looks like living a life fully surrendered to God's purposes. "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10).*
- *There are many things God wants to teach us:*
 - *To learn to be humble*
 - *To learn to love*
 - *To learn to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.*
 - *To learn to trust Jesus fully.*
- *It takes courage to face our failures and admit we are wrong but until we can we will remain unteachable.*
- *There are two things I have learned about myself:*
 - *I can be wrong.*
 - *I can be wrong and not realize it.*
 - *It hurts to be corrected but it hurts more not to be corrected.*

A SMALL KINDNESS

Though I met Katja more than twenty years ago, our brief friendship in a season of my life taught me a profound lesson which has stayed with me all these years.

I was the pastor's wife. Katja was my neighbor. From all outward appearances there was nothing distinct or unique about her. Her short grey permed hair, slender physique and sensible clothing could best be described as ordinary. Her eyes, however, were remarkable and reflected a deep well of sadness coupled with an utter sense of resignation.

When I knocked on her door Katja responded very positively to my invitation to come to my home every Wednesday morning for a neighborhood coffee time – a time we would make new friends and study the Bible together, one book at a time. We were on a journey. How, we asked, was the Bible relevant to the issues we faced as women? What did it have to say about the purpose of our lives in the struggles, fears, joys and sorrows we faced each day?

Most of the women around my dining table, including Katja, had never read the Bible. She had grown up going to church all her life. Still, at the age of seventy, she rose to the challenge to study the Bible for the answers to the pressing need of her life.

That, it turned out, was a fifty-year marriage that was devoid of love. The tidy little bungalow with the well-manicured lawn she and her husband Ivan shared, reflected the pleasant exterior we all knew as their neighbors. But underneath gaped a chasm in their marriage so wide, Katja wondered if it could ever be bridged. This was not the love she and Ivan had dreamed of so many years ago when they had stood at the altar of marriage and vowed to love and cherish each other. Day after day, year after year, through the disappointment of childlessness and growing frailty, small hidden resentments continued to fester. They began to lead lives that intersected only occasionally to eat a meal together in total silence, each at a loss for what to say.

"What?", Katja asked with a quivering voice, "can God do about this troubling situation?" Her eyes were downcast and she hurriedly brushed away a tear before looking around the table at her newfound friends. We sat in stunned silence. This was a deep and painful cry from the heart of our hurting friend who had dared to bare her soul with us. What did the God of all creation, the

Creator of love and marriage, have to offer Katja? We bowed our heads and humbly asked God to help, to give her hope for the miracle to change this seemingly hopeless situation. Weeks passed and we continued to pray with no apparent change. The icy finger of winter was beginning to release its grip and the joyful songs of the killdeer and robin welcomed spring. One Wednesday morning Katja opened my front door and greeted me with a twinkle in her eye and a brightness in her entire demeanor. As we ladies sipped out coffee she suddenly burst out. . . “I think God has been speaking to me, except its not at all like I expected Him to!” As her story unfolded, all their married lives Ivan had always thrown his clothes inside out into the laundry hamper. Gentle reminders had come first. Later harsh accusations and angry words. Then years of silence as each help to their positions. Ivan would not turn his clothes right side out. No way. He was a hard-working man and did not have time for small, insignificant stuff like that. Katja, however, was not going to be outsmarted by him. She was determined to get a step ahead in this unfriendly game. If a shirt was inside out, that’s the way it would be washed, dried and hung back in the closet. There! That would show him a thing or two.

One day Katja was on her knees in her garden. Her hands were wrestling with a crop of persistent weeds but her heart was far away in prayer. Suddenly the thought came to her, “Turn Ivan’s clothes right side out and, with a kind heart, hang them in his closet.” “Could this be God?” she wondered.

Instantly she was on her feet. Telling no one, she proceeded to do just that. Such an overflow of joy had come as she worked that before the day ended she had set the entire closet straight. Taking pains to do it just right, she redid every shirt and pair of trousers. Not one was left inside out. Soon, the clothes in the dresser were taken out and put back in place as they had not been for nearly fifty years. The simple, kind act had brought such delight to her heart it didn’t matter there had been no apparent response from Ivan. A great burden of long-held resentment in her heart was gone! A fresh breeze of kindness was flowing through her soul.

One day while Katja was preparing dinner she opened the door to her refrigerator. Where once an assortment of Ivan’s favorite cheeses were stored, stood an entire row of her favourites! Her hand began to tremble as she counted out each package one by one. Ten different kinds! Her heart burst with thanksgiving for this small but lavish act of kindness. She alone understood its significance. Years ago, an act of bitterness had ended with each buying their own cheese, a silent weekly testimony to the coldness that marked every part of their marriage.

When she saw him later that evening Ivan said nothing about the cheese but she noted a tender smile and a softness in his expression that erased the pained and anxious look he had worn for more years than she could remember.

Years passed, bringing more changes quietly and naturally into their lives.

On a wintry day Ivan awoke to an indescribable feeling of weakness. The once-robust man now needed Katja to steady him as he stood to his feet. The family doctor delivered the devastating news that Ivan was incurably ill. It was a long journey, filled with sweetness and sorrow for both of them. For, she later told me, what began as a simple turning right-side-out of Ivan’s shirts and a row of Katja’s favourite cheese in the refrigerator, turned into the five sweetest years of their married life.

BY Carie den Hartog-Terry

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- *Paul laid out the pattern so we can learn from the Word of God and those who instruct us through the Word of God.*
- *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Listed here are the four aspects of how the Word of God fully equips us for every good work.*
- *The Word of God “is profitable for doctrine.”*
- *Doctrine tells us the way things should be. It is our goal or the ideal.*
- *Doctrine sets the standard so we can understand what true holiness, consecration, and godliness look like.*
- *Doctrine enables us to understand what a fruitful and victorious life look like.*
- *Doctrine is not meant to demoralize us. Its purpose is to encourage us to understand and live the great and abundant life that God offers to every believer.*
- *The devil wants us to think we are miserable failures, when in fact we are to be overcomers and live an abundant life. “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10).*
- *Doctrine not only enables us to understand how God wants us to live, but it enables us to understand how we can achieve it: “the righteous will live by faith.” (Romans 1:17).*
- *Correct doctrine energizes and encourages us when we realize that we do not accomplish this in our own strength. Anything we accomplish is by the grace of God in us. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27).*
- *We can discern when our doctrine is both correct and complete, because it will produce within us a deep desire for God as well as an unquenchable joy, “whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).*
- *The Word of God is for reproof. Reproof is pointing out to someone where they have gone wrong or have fallen short.*
- *If we do not have sound doctrine we will misunderstand and misinterpret the reproof that the Word of God is speaking to us.*

- *Reproof is not meant to bring shame, guilt, or condemnation. Reproof points out those areas in our lives where we need to improve, so we can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.*
- *Reproof is a sign that God is our Father and that He loves us and His favour is extended toward us. “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:6-7).*
- *The Word of God is for correction. Correction is given to show us how to do something correctly. Correction helps us to improve what we were previously doing incorrectly.*
- *Here is the difference between correction and reproof: Reproof points out what was done incorrectly and correction shows us how to do it correctly.*
- *The Word of God is for instruction in righteousness. The word translated as “instruction” in the Greek means “discipline or training.” Instruction relates to putting into practice what we have learned until we are able to do it properly.*
- *Summarizing the four things that the Word of God does for us in terms of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction can be seen in the example of a teacher and a student.*
- *First, the teacher teaches the students how to perform a certain task or to solve a certain type of problem. This can be compared to doctrine.*
- *Next, the teacher asks the students to apply what they have been taught and hopefully learned.*
- *The teacher then observes how the students are doing and points out those things that are being done incorrectly. This is reproof.*
- *Then the teacher explains to the student how to do it correctly. This is correction.*
- *Finally, the teacher gives the students assignments so they can practice what they have been taught until they are able to do it correctly. This is instruction or training and is often learned by repetition.*
- *We train ourselves by repeatedly applying the Word of God to our lives. A level of excellence will be developed in those areas of our lives in which we persevere.*
- *An example of how to apply doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction to our lives can be seen in what the Bible teaches husbands about how to treat their wives.*

- *Paul gives God’s standard of how husbands are to love their wives by using the example of Christ’s love for His Church. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25).*
- *A husband’s love for his wife is to be a sacrificial love where he puts her needs above his own. This would be doctrine and it sets the ideal that God has for how a husband should treat his wife.*
- *Next comes reproof when we as husbands sometimes fail and become upset, impatient, and lack empathy. We may even treat our wives badly. “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” (Colossians 3:19).*
- *Next comes correction where the Word reminds us that we need to be patient, understanding, and realize there are things that affect her in ways that may not affect us. “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”(1 Peter 3:7). Treating your wife well even affects your prayer life!*
- *Finally comes training where we have the wonderful opportunity to practice it again and again so we can keep improving until we get it right, “dwell with them with understanding.”*
- *The enemy may try to make us feel we have failed or wasted so many years that our lives are hopeless but this is not true. Jesus’ sacrifice is all sufficient to redeem every mistake if we simply repent and learn from Him.*
- *Samson is an example of someone who was totally unteachable and self-willed. For many years he neglected the call of God on his life and chose to live a life dedicated to fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.*
- *He then joined himself to a Philistine woman named Delilah. Delilah means “to bring low.” Who in their right mind would want to date a woman with such a name?! “Lust makes us stupid.” – maybe a good bumper sticker.*
- *Samson was a man who wanted no boundaries and was unwilling to learn or receive correction from anyone. However, his behavior led him to be captured by the Philistines, have his eyes gouged out, be imprisoned, and work like an oxen threshing out grain.*
- *However, Samson at the lowest point in his life, imprisoned in a Philistine prison made an important decision—he began to listen to God and began to learn from Him. He understood his calling in life was to deliver Israel from their enemies, the Philistines.*

- *During his time in prison Samson began to learn his lessons well. His heart turned back to God. Samson decided to sacrifice his own life so that the enemies of Israel would be weakened. "Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life." (Judges 16:30). Samson accomplished more at the end of his life by choosing to live for God than he had during the majority of his life seeking to satisfy his own lust.*
- *What is even more wonderful, is that although he had wasted so much of his life satisfying the lusts of the flesh, at the end of his life he became teachable. In the end he is named as an overcome in Hebrews, Chapter eleven. He is even named among such notables as Gideon, Barak, David, and Samuel. "And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets." (Hebrews 11:32).*
- *It is never too late to become teachable and learn so that we can also fulfill God's purposes for our lives!*