

“Adult Faith and Learning:
Personal and Ministry Response”

CF560
Adult Formation and Discipleship
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1. **The process of adult learning is very complex:** *Many things affect adult learning, including internal factors (readiness, motivation, prior experience, prior knowledge of how learning works, emotional and spiritual maturity, etc.) and environmental factors (including social, cultural, formalized educational opportunities, forced or voluntary requirements, etc.)*

Personal Implications: 1) I need to remember when considering pursuing formal learning, that I need to consider all factors involved, including the status of my non-academic life and any anticipated changes. 2) I need to acknowledge and accept the fact that things such as stress, fear, and other emotions interfere with my ability to focus on learning. 3) After my crisis this quarter, I discovered that what facilitated my nervous breakdown was the fact that I did not allow myself time to feel the shock and disappointment of God not answering my prayers in the way I expected. Instead, despite having not slept or eaten for three days, I tried to push, full steam ahead, in solving problems and doing homework. My inability to focus under those circumstances put me over the edge when I could not accomplish anything. I have discovered that I need to accept that sometimes, I just need to allow myself time to feel and to process what I am experiencing before I can focus on my learning goals.

Ministry Implications: 1) I have recently come to the realization that just because I love to learn, and enjoy the challenges associated with learning that does not mean that everyone else does. This means that any educational ministry program or other curriculum I design needs to consider that most people do not enjoy the labor of learning. 2) To remember when planning curriculum to carefully assess the learners, including things such as whether learning is voluntary or forced. 3) When designing learning experiences, I also need to factor into the learning environment considerations for how extenuating circumstances affect the learner’s ability to focus on the learning goals.

2. **Adult learning, development and formation are processes rather than goals to achieve:** *These processes take place over time without necessarily having specific start and end points. While each of these processes can be halted by human means, they are not intended to end until death.*

Personal Implications: 1) To remember that God will always be stretching me to new lengths and depths of personal growth. 2) To understand that I will always be undergoing some sort of personal transformation. 3) I need to learn how to take such “stretching” experiences in stride so as to not become so bothered by it.

Ministry Implications: 1) Rather than trying to solve peoples’ struggles, I need to remember that often my role will be to help them to develop skills so they can learn to deal with those struggles themselves. 2) To emphasize to those people I will be teaching the idea of process or journey rather than destination. 3) I need to communicate the benefits of enjoying the journey rather than dwelling on the outcome.

3. **The purpose of formation, in God’s eyes, is to help us to become more Christ-like – not more productive:** *God has ordained the Christian journey so that we can learn to submit our wills and ourselves to him. He is more concerned with how our character develops than in how much “good” we produce for him.*

Personal Implications: 1) I need to remember that while he has put before me a charge to do his will, he is more concerned with how I grow to be more like him in the process. 2) I need to not rush the process, and remember that he will bring about his good purposes in his time. 3) I need to remember that he comes before ministry. 4) I need to remember that whatever he allows to happen in my life is to bring about his purposes **for** my life.

Ministry Implications: 1) As I teach people about how to find their callings; I need to help them to understand that when it is God-ordained, then he will be taking them on a journey first to bring about the character he intends for them to have. 2) To remember to teach those same people to always seek God’s guidance, and to remember that God intends to join them on their journey, and that he will equip them to do what he has called them to do.

4. **God uses a variety of methods to teach individuals:** *God uses a variety of ways to teach as illustrated in the bible: lecture, demonstration, parable, analogy, experiential, and social, and behavioral.*

Personal Implications: 1) To see that God uses all things in my life to teach me lessons and to develop my character. 2) To trust him and his higher purposes when things do not make sense to me. 3) To be open to God’s ways of teaching. 4) To learn to recognize when I need to ask him if he is trying to teach me something, rather than to get angry about a situation.

Ministry Implications: 1) Be open to, and looking for, how God chooses to teach different people through different methods. 2) To remember to be in subjection to his ways of teaching others. 3) To remember that, oftentimes, my role is to help people to understand what God is doing with them – not to fix their problems.

5. **The methods God uses are unique to each individual based on needs and learning styles:** *God knows what methods will best bring about the response he is looking for, and custom-designs each individual’s plan for formation accordingly.*

Personal Implications: 1) To learn how to recognize how God most often works in my life. 2) To know how I best learn, and to what I most frequently respond. 3) To be always seeking to understand what he is trying to teach me.

Ministry Implications: 1) To remember that God knows best what the person needs. 2) To remember not to project my expectations and learning preferences onto others. 3) To remember to be open to a different way of God’s teaching for every person to whom he entrusts in my hands. 4) To be willing and able to recognize when a teaching situation is beyond my control, and to be able to lay it at God’s feet.

6. **Critical life events usually bring about paradigm shifts and/or transformative learning:** *Critical or significant life events are often so disruptive to the individual’s schema that they usually bring about paradigm shifts.*

Personal Implications: 1) To not see the trials I have experienced as a burden, but rather as an opportunity for character development. 2) To trust God when things do not go the way I want, and to focus on his good character. 3) To always keep an eternal perspective on life so as to not let the trials of this world to let me down. 4) To remember that even during the midst of a crisis, there will always be an end to it eventually.

Ministry Implications: 1) To expect that the people I will be serving will often seek my help as a result of some critical life event since 80 percent of all adults seek learning as a result of a life transition. 2) To teach people to see the value of understanding that these events are a part of life that everyone experiences, and that they can persevere in spite of them. 3) To lead and to teach these principles by example.

7. **Paradigm shifts and transformative learning usually are very taxing on the individual:**

Paradigm shifts and transformative learning in and of themselves require individuals to question assumptions upon which their reality is based. Having these assumptions challenged tends to cause the individual to undergo emotional, cognitive and spiritual disarray.

Personal Implications: 1) To understand and accept the fact that when I face such events in my life, I will be experiencing a multitude of emotions, and the I need to allow myself the time to experience and process such feelings. 2) To learn to recognize when these events in my life are taxing my emotional health, and to seek help in dealing with it.

Ministry Implications: 1) To allow people who are facing a critical or significant life event the right to experience whatever emotions they are feeling. 2) To show them grace when they are not able to meet my timetables or self-serving expectations. 3) To see that when a person is questioning themselves or their assumptions that it is not necessarily a bad thing – they could be experiencing a positive paradigm shift. 4) To understand that not all honest questioning of assumptions is a sign of rebellion, and to teach others to do the same. 5) The

church can and should play a vital role in providing people who are undergoing a paradigm shift a safe place to turn as they try to cope with the stress that it causes.

8. **In this rapidly changing world, today’s adults need to be prepared to engage in life-long learning:** *While the “Teepee” mentality may have been an appropriate way for one to view the adult life, in the Information Age, this is no longer an option. The world is undergoing rapid changes unlike anytime in history. The only way for an individual to be able to survive and cope with it is to become a life-long learner.*

Personal Implications: 1) I need to resist the temptation to think that because I have an advanced degree, I have a competitive advantage over others. I can see right now how what I have been taught (including theories on adult learning) will most likely be outdated in just a few years. 2) I need to be prepared to keep up with the latest information continually.

Ministry Implications: 1) The effects of a rapidly changing world and a need for life-long learning are going to affect the church as well because the body of Christ will bring all their issues into the church, and the church will need to minister to such needs. 2) The church needs to understand the effect that this need for life-long learning will have on the individual, and know how it can respond appropriately. 3) This reinforces in my mind why helping people to find and achieve their calling means they will need to understand how education fits into the picture. If their God-given calling requires them to acquire additional skills or education (which is a guarantee in a rapidly changing world), then they will not be able to achieve that calling if they do not know where to turn for help in acquiring additional education. 4) Life-long learning in itself means that individuals will be undergoing a constant paradigm shifting process. Individuals will need to be constantly supported as their realities are constantly being shifted around. Thus they should have mentors in their lives to offer continuity and stability in their lives.

9. **In this rapidly-changing world, adults need to learn how to become self-directed in their pursuits of life-long learning:** *In eras gone by, it may have been appropriate for people to allow themselves to become dependent on other people or institutions to determine what or*

how they will learn. However, with the world and institutions changing so rapidly, and the expectation of fewer long-term relationships, individuals will need to learn how to assume responsibility for setting and achieving their own learning goals.

Personal Implications: 1) As I progress on my journey towards what the Lord has called me to do, I can see that I will need to increasingly engage in self-directed learning. This is why I chose Fuller’s certificate program, because I could choose those classes, which fit my needs. 2) I am contemplating the possibility of someday pursuing a doctorate degree. I am increasingly beginning to realize that it will probably need to be something, which allows me the freedom and flexibility to set my own learning goals and to choose classes that fit such goals – like what I am doing here. Therefore I will need to choose a program accordingly.

Ministry Implications: 1) This reinforces in my mind why the church should care about this issue. In a rapidly changing world, people will be in a constant state of change and confusion as their paradigms are constantly being challenged. Add in on top of that, the idea that the individual will need to assume responsibility for their own learning, means they will need to be supported as they learn how to do so. 2) Individuals will need to learn how to learn – including understanding self-directed learning and its benefits. 3) I need to include this concept into the curriculum I am developing.

10. Information derived from social science and educational research can aid in the understanding of adult formation as long as it is subjugated to biblical principles:

Theories and research generated in the fields of education and social sciences can often be found to reflect biblical principles. However, that same information can be either emphasized too much (thus taking principles out of context) or used to avoid acknowledging a divine intervention in a person’s life. Thus, those principles can then become a hindrance to the Christian faith. However, these theories and research findings instead should be viewed from the perspective of helping us to understand how God’s works in the lives of individuals.

Personal Implications: 1) I personally do not have a problem with learning about new theories and research findings, even at the risk of discovering they might be very unbiblical.

However, I need to continually assess that which I learn in the world and test it against the scriptures. 2) I need to remember to continually exercise discretion regarding what information I share with others. 3) I need to always remember to acknowledge God’s sovereign rule in all matters, and remember to give him the glory in all things.

Ministry Implications: 1) It is important to remember that not all Christians will agree with this philosophy; and that such people will not be willing to receive such information for fear that they will be receiving false teaching. 2) I need to be prepared to provide biblical support to any idea I may chose to teach to Christians. 3) I need to not take such challenges personally; rather to remember that they are concerned about being faithful to God.

11. Adult/Christian educators are most effective when they understand the complex nature of adult learning: *A truly effective adult or Christian educator will understand that teaching goes beyond lecturing and learning goes beyond passing tests in formalized educational settings and understand that learning is very holistic; and consequently will set out to assess the learner, identify needs, define outcomes, and design learning experiences accordingly.*

Personal Implications: 1) To realize that while I know I tend to learn best in the traditional classroom environment, I also recognize that God also uses other methodologies to teach me. I need to learn to recognize them for what they are. 2) To make a point of viewing experiences, which would otherwise be hard for me to deal with, as an opportunity for a learning experience.

Ministry Implications: 1) I need to remember that other people do not learn in the same ways that I learn; therefore, I need to remember to incorporate a variety of learning methodologies and styles into activities I create. 2) I need to always remember to assess the learner and the purposes for learning before designing a learning curriculum.

12. **Most adults think very concretely; whereas most teachers are college educated and therefore think abstractly.** *As always, teachers need to take into account their audience, and learn how to translate the abstract into concrete learning experiences.*

Personal Implications: 1) I am consciously well aware of the fact that I am a very abstract learner – I prefer to learn theories first, then to apply them. As a learner, I very much enjoy the traditional classroom method of teaching. 2) As I continue on in my own journey of life-long learning, I should remember that this is a good way for me to learn.

Ministry Implications: 1) I know that since this is not my preference, it is also not my strength as a teacher. 2) I need to always remember that only a small percentage of the population prefers my learning style. Therefore, when designing curriculum programs for the general public, I need to remember to make an effort to include tangible and concrete learning methodologies. 3) I need to realize that while God has gifted me with the ability to take a lot of very complex information and refine it into simple and easy to understand language, sometimes I need to depend on others within the body of Christ to translate that abstract language into tangible and concrete teaching tools.