

9/24/23

THE HANDOFF

Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Special Music: "Teach Your Children"

Kathy Mattea, Alison Krauss, Suzy Boggus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GP5m_1UfRs



SHARING THE FRUIT

**What good is wisdom
If it is never shared?
What good is wisdom
If it is never paired
With actions and grace,
But remains an edifice
Of empty words and prayers?**

**What good is experience
If it is never taught
To those who come after
Trying to take their shot
At saving the world
From chaos unfurled
And untying the generational knot.**

**What good is patience
If it is never learned?
And every situation
Leaves us concerned
That our time is lost
And we spurn the cost,
An investment unreturned?**

**As we look at Autumn Fruit
We can begin to take notice and see
That the fruit that we have ripened with time
Needs to be given fair and free
To younger minds who will come behind us.
Wisdom, Patience, and Experience,
Gracious gifts in perpetuity.**

In the Star Wars universe, padawan is a term used when referring to an apprentice or trainee, mostly with regards to Jedi knights. There is a certain fascination watching a padawan study and train to eventually become a master themselves. We cheered as Luke Skywalker learned from both Obi Wan Kenobi and Yoda. George Lucas coined the phrase, but it seems to be derived from ancient Sanskrit, which was a common way for Lucas to expand his Star Wars vocabulary. But I have to admit, I am not fluent in Sanskrit.

For millennia, the position of apprentice was a common practice for all trades and skills around the world. Whether a child was sold into an apprenticeship or volunteered to be an apprentice, the goal was to teach that young person the trade or skill that the master craftsman practiced. Although the young person was often overworked and lived in poverty, there were some positive outcomes as well. The young person gained knowledge and skill that was passed on from the master to the apprentice so that one day the apprentice would become the master and seek out an apprentice of their own.

The apprentice often did the scut work for the master (cleaning the shop, taking care of the tools, polishing and sharpening, and whatever else the master didn't really care for doing). The apprentice was seldom paid for his or her efforts. But they had a place to sleep, even if it was on a pile of hay, and food to eat, although that was often meager.

In truth, apprenticeships were common even into the mid 20th century, although they were slowly phased out in favor of child labor laws. And somewhere along the way, the term was changed to "intern." There are both paid

and unpaid internships today, but they are still starting positions for those who want to work in their chosen professions and need a foot in the door. It's an experience that allows them to learn under the direction of those who are considered masters of their professions. But often the work is still scut work (deliver this, clean that, fix this, research that). Not that it doesn't have value. After all, the work needs to be done, and it is an opportunity for a young person to be involved in something that they are considering becoming proficient at.

There are two approaches that the teacher of an intern/apprentice can take.

1) They can see the intern/apprentice as someone totally relegated to the scut work without ever allowing the intern to learn the intricacies of the trade, treating them more like slave labor rather than a teacher/student relationship.

2) They can take their responsibility for passing along the knowledge and skills that they have acquired so that the intern/apprentice might one day have the necessary skills to become a master in their own right.

This guaranteed the experience of the master did not die with them and the work continued to flourish. It is a most difficult task when someone has to learn a profession from without the input from a mentor to guide them.

Unfortunately, in the first instance, there is no humility involved. In such a case there is no desire to pass along learned skills. This might possibly be due to the craftsman's desire to keep the apprentice from replacing him or her at a

later date. It can also involve jealousy or even a desire to retain authority and power over the apprentice and keep him or her in their place.

In the second instance though, passing along those skills and techniques are a driving desire for the craftsman who realizes that all good things must end and they may no longer be able to do the necessary work. There is a satisfaction in knowing that the skill and knowledge do not die with the craftsman, but instead become a legacy to the next generation of workers.

Everyone has to start somewhere. Think of it as paying our dues. A mechanic may bring on a young helper who initially learns to change oil, replace tires, check and refill fluids, and all those things that any mechanic must know and should be able to do in their sleep. But the master mechanic can't do the important things that only he can do if he is constantly rotating tires and changing oil. It is the helper's job to make sure the master mechanic doesn't have to worry about the little things so that he can work on replacing engines, chasing electrical issues, or adjusting or swapping out transmissions. But when the helper's work is caught up, he or she can help the master mechanic and learn about the more difficult work that the mechanic is doing and learn from his experience.

Why are you telling us this, preacher? We know this. Well, I beg to differ. We, as a people, lost something when we stopped thinking of ourselves as teachers and mentors. Most of us decided that we didn't need to train up the next generation. That was somebody else's responsibility. Even in schools, we seldom let teachers teach. They are relegated to meeting state guidelines and

standards and their skills validated by how many students can pass a test. There are even many schools where teachers no longer need to have a proficiency in the subjects they are teaching. We managed to make teachers so uncomfortable in teaching their students that many are leaving the profession before they even get started. We have forgotten the system of teaching what we know and focused more on the act of teaching rather than the transference of knowledge. Teachers are often relegated to teaching things that they are not passionate about, and we wonder why they have a hard time keeping students interested. My heart goes out to teachers who struggle every day to keep their students engaged, productive, and learning. We have lost our way by forcing teachers to teach students to pass a test and never teaching them how to think for themselves.

I don't know about you, but my mom and dad made sure that I knew how to cook, clean, do laundry, and balance a checkbook. But I fear kids today didn't have that kind of knowledge transference from their parents. So many struggle with basic functional math skills, like making change or using a ruler, or reading the hands on a clock. I also fear that the phones that we consider our lifelines are training us to be poor communicators. How ironic is that? And yet, we feel no obligation to step in and help with wisdom and guidance.

But I want to talk about the greatest educator that ever lived. Yes, that would be Jesus Christ. This carpenter (a trade he learned from his father) who came from Galilee gathered twelve men of various backgrounds and educations and trained them up in the ways of God. He used stories, scripture, actions, and involvement to teach his disciples what they needed to know. He went the extra

mile to help them understand that many of the things that they had been taught failed to address the basic relationships between God and man. He explained to them that his arrival on earth was to right the boat and bring a new age of enlightenment. To teach them that the law was made for man, not man for the law. To teach them that loving their neighbor was more important than being right. To teach them that God loved them so much that he gave his only son for them. To teach them that service to those in need is far more important than serving religious leaders and the wealthy.

Jesus knew that he only had three short years to train these men up into servant leaders that would change the world. He gave them the greatest thing he had to offer. His time. Imagine knowing that you only have three years to complete the impossible, and still be able to freely give of your time. He didn't spend all of his time healing the sick. He didn't spend all of his time performing miracles. He didn't spend all of his time arguing with religious leaders. No. He spent the majority of his time teaching those who had chosen to follow him. He gave of himself so that when the time came for him to return to his Father, the work would continue on. And the greatest lesson that they learned was that they needed to teach others so that they too could pass along that same knowledge and incite to those that became part of the fold.

When Jesus ascended, he didn't leave a void behind. He left a living, growing organism known as the church universal, believers teaching believers, who in turn taught new believers. A spiritual machine set in motion at the most opportune time to spread the message of Jesus Christ across the globe. And so

many of those followers paid the ultimate price for their dedication in spreading the Word.

One thing that I have found is that often when we teach others, the message can become garbled. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is never about the messenger that delivers that gospel. Do you remember the story of Priscilla and Aquilla, the couple had befriended Paul in Ephesus? Let's take just a moment to re-examine part of their story regarding Apollos:

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 18: 24-26

Although Apollos was preaching the basic idea of baptism from sin, he had not been taught out the new baptism that came from the resurrection. He did not know about the Holy Spirit or how important it was to the Christian life. Lacking that knowledge did not keep him from spreading the word, but the word that he was spreading was incomplete, which is why Priscilla and Aquila felt the need to

take him aside and bring him up to speed without dashing his fervor. They mentored him and he was grateful for their patience and insight.

The message of the Gospel is very simple. God became man and sacrificed himself so that we, sinners that we are, can come into a right relationship with our Creator. A good messenger of the Gospel will never point to themselves, but always to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is our guide and conscience in all matters. It would be a most difficult thing to live a Christian life if we did not have that basic information.

In 1 Corinthians 1:11-17, Paul addresses this issue head on. Let me read it to you:

11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.

16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.)

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

We are not to be seeking followers for ourselves. Everything that we do and teach should point to our savior. He is the source of our knowledge. He is the source of our grace. He is the source of our identity in a world gone mad.

We are not called to follow Dwight L. Moody. We are not called follow John Wesley or John Calvin. We are not called to follow Thomas Campbell or Barton Stone. We are not called to follow Matthew Henry or Charles Spurgeon. We are not called to follow Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, Greg Locke, Erwin McManus, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, Charles Stanley, Andy Stanley, John Piper, Francis Chan, Greg Laurie, or any other minister. And we are most certainly not called to follow Walt Wellborn. Each and every one of us is called to follow Jesus Christ and no other. If we are confused by what we are being taught, there is only one true source that can clear that up. It can only be found in our personal relationship with Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

That does not in any way suggest that it is not our responsibility to teach the Gospel to those around us. It simply means that whenever we are teaching others, we should always be pointing to the cross and never ourselves.

And that should be the same with all the knowledge that we pass along. If our concern is only to build up our own legacy, such passing of knowledge becomes tainted. These Autumn Fruits are to be shared in order to lift the person

we are sharing with, to pass along the wisdom, experience, and patience that God has graced us with in our lives so that each generation does not have to learn it all over again.

Over the course of this next week, I would like for us each to consider what we are able to pass along. What can we teach others? How can we make their lives better by providing the wisdom we have gained or our experience? We should never underestimate what we have to offer. We are who we are because of the lives and experiences that God had graciously given us and the mentors that have spoken into our lives. Each of us is unique in the gifts that we bring to the table. Each of our Autumn Fruits are a collection of those experiences. The ripened fruit that we pass along should never be wasted, but with the utmost thanks be brought to the table of our community in Jesus Christ.

**Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.**

God bless you all!

AMEN

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