

Call to Obedience #456
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

We Can Learn About God From Each Other

Reimar A. C. Schultze

I believe there are three ways by which we learn about God:

1. We can learn about God from nature.

Here are some passages that confirm this: *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork* (Ps. 19:1). *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse* (Rom. 1:20). God has stamped His image upon every sunrise, upon every night sky, upon every walking, creeping, swimming and flying creature and upon every atom. For this reason alone, the psalmist proclaims: *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD* (Ps. 150:6).

2. We can learn about God by revelation.

The Apostle Peter knew that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, by revelation. Jesus said to him: *...for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven* (Matt. 16:17). We learn much about God's holiness, power and grace by revelation.

3. We can learn about God from each other.

This is one reason why we need each other and should gather together, sharing with one another our experiences with God. This is why going to church is so important and it needs to be a place that provides fellowship and breaking of bread. These were two of the pillars of the early church: *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers* (Acts 2:42). In fact, the Bible tells us that we need to go to church: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...* (Heb. 10:25). If you do not meet with others, you impoverish your soul. The more often we come together, the more we learn about God from one another. In fact, the whole Bible is a book about God interacting with people. We learn about God by seeing His interactions with men. We learn many things about God by the way He interacted with Adam, with Abraham, with Moses and so on.

And now today, let us learn a little about how God interacted with Peter. After Peter had the revelation that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus said to him: *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven...* (Matt. 16:19). Keys are for opening something. What did Jesus give Peter the keys to? Jesus gave Peter the keys to open the Kingdom Age of the Church which began at Pentecost. Of course, Peter knew nothing about this Kingdom Age that Jesus was talking about. He thought it would be the restoration of the kingdom of David, a physical kingdom. He understood that he was now in charge of this kingdom and he had to take care of Jesus.

And here is our first lesson from this interaction: God has no trouble placing a lot of responsibility on a human being. I have heard it said so often: "I do not trust man. I do not trust any man." But God did and still does. I have heard it said also: "I do not trust a young man." But God did. Peter was probably in his 20s, and Jesus gave him keys which had been in His possession for the last 4000 years. On top of that, Jesus knew that Peter did not have the slightest idea what it was about. Even more amazingly, Jesus did not even give Peter a manual of operation. It is like somebody all of a sudden putting a very young fisherman in charge of the Mercedes-Benz Corporation! Or it is like putting a small child behind the steering wheel and having him drive across the country. Oh, what a great God we have! His ways are higher than our ways. I believe that all who heard about this transfer of keys to Peter were worried. But God was not worried. God is never worried about the people He appoints.

Now let us have a look at how Peter responded. Jesus went on to say that He would be killed. *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee* (Matt. 16:22). Peter's first executive action was to rebuke the Son of God! Can you see how quickly a calling from God or a spiritual gift can easily get into our heads and make us think we are somebody special? Have you ever seen people who claim that they have received a baptism of the Holy Spirit and right away they begin to throw their weight around? Have you seen a Christian with some success in soul winning or singing or giving begin to think that they are somebody? Didn't it seem obvious that Jesus made a mistake? Surely Jesus should have dismissed Peter for his incompetence! Yes, Peter was incompetent, but that was no reason for his dismissal. Hallelujah! This is something else that we learn about God.

While we fire people for incompetence, Jesus looks at the heart. When He gave Peter the keys, He knew what was in his heart. As long as you love God

with all your heart and try your best, God will never fire you for your incompetence. So at first, Peter looks very bad to us, but if you look closely, you can see the good. He had fire, he had zeal and he had a burning love for Jesus. Why dismiss such a man? Jesus did not dismiss him, but He corrected him. He rebuked him by saying: *...Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me...* (Matt. 16:23). Then Jesus gave him instructions so that he would not fail again: *...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me* (Matt. 16:24).

Jesus gave Peter a manual of operation after all. It was not to study the Bible a lot or take classes in church leadership, but it was in dying and following. Until you get this, my friend, you will say the wrong words, cut off the ears of people and deny your Lord. This is Jesus' seminary: we must die and follow Him. This is where you obtain a divinity degree from Jesus and nowhere else. Just as Jesus was willing to talk to Peter severely to save him from heading in the wrong direction, you must also submit to Jesus as He corrects you for your failings. In the same way, you must courageously deal with your brother who is about to lose his way. When Jesus dealt with Peter, it was like surgery without anesthesia. He told Peter that he was of the devil, that his attitudes and mindset were corrupt.

Right here is confirmation that Jesus did not make a mistake in giving Peter the keys. First of all, Jesus knows ahead of time that all of us will fumble the ball from time to time. Even Paul had his moments of embarrassment (in Acts 23:5 he had to apologize for scolding the High Priest). Jesus knows that ahead of time, just as parents know that their little ones will stumble and fall many times. All of us will make a fool out of ourselves from time to time. Jesus allows for that. He knows our frame. He knows we are weak. He is not an unreasonable taskmaster. It is just like a factory: when they hire a new worker, they have already budgeted for the scrap he will produce as he learns. Jesus has budgeted for your scrap. Secondly, it is obvious Jesus did not make a mistake by the way Peter reacted to the rebuke. His love and zeal for Jesus were so great that nothing could drive him away from his Master. That is the kind of man Jesus was looking for to lead His disciples. Peter was a man who fell down, but knew how to get up and pick up the pieces and continue on.

After Peter's revelation and rebuke, a week went by. I do not know the agony, the shame, the darkness, or the pain that Peter went through that week. The more you love, the more you hurt when you fail the one you love the most. But because he stuck with Jesus, we have this reading: *And after six*

days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him (Matt. 17:1-3).

So here is what we learn from this divine/human interaction: God has incredible confidence in His chosen ones. God will not fire us for incompetence, but He looks at the heart. We will all fumble the ball at times, but He knows our frame. We do not become spiritual by gifts or callings but by dying.

No matter what, my friend, as you stick with Jesus, you too will sooner or later come to your Mount of Transfiguration where you will be transfigured to shine like the sun as well. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matt. 13:43)!*

We can learn from each other about God. Therefore, I want to see all of you in church so that I can learn more about my God and my Lord from you.

Call to Obedience # 456
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org