



Spiritual Learning Method

RENEWING TECHNIQUE

How do we learn specific information? There's not an easy answer to that because we learn in a variety of ways. But some things we think we know, we have not really "learned." We've just heard it from someone else and assumed they knew what they were talking about. The economist John Kenneth Galbraith first used the term "Conventional Wisdom," to describe things that people just assume to be true.

My wife recently told me, "Everybody knows it is best to sleep in a cold room." I asked her how she knew that, but she couldn't remember. That's called source amnesia and all of us have it for some things we "know." But when it comes to spiritual learning, conventional wisdom can lead us astray. Whatever you know about God should *not* be subject to source amnesia.

Prior to the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's, the Catholic Church told people what spiritual things they needed to know. It taught what doctrines were true and what they had to do to please God. Everything the people knew about spiritual matters was learned through the church. That arrangement worked because people tend to be mentally lazy and most are okay with someone else thinking for them.

Even after the Reformation, when people had more access to the Bible, the lazy nature of people kept them from searching the Scriptures. Educated men, like Luther and Calvin, considered spiritual concepts and taught their own interpretations. These teachings splintered into diverse groups, many holding slightly different interpretations of Scripture.

Today, many of these have coalesced into denominations. Each with its own conventional wisdom for spiritual knowledge. Accepting the conventional wisdom is much easier than searching the scriptures yourself.

And that's why many Evangelicals and Pentecostals base our faith on feelings or anecdotal stories. We hear statements like: "How did you feel when you gave your heart to Jesus?" And song lyrics like "When the Spirit comes down it makes my heart pound." And tell stories like, "The doctors said a lady in my sister's church was going to die, but God healed her and she's still alive forty years later."



Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Romans 12:2

A truly renewed mind uses a different spiritual learning style to learn Truth. Conventional wisdom and anecdotes may be mentally easier, but a renewed mind does the hard work of searching the scriptures to learn spiritual truths.

After all, we don't rely on emotional feelings or anecdotes for learning in other areas of knowledge. We've developed specific learning methods for those disciplines. Here are just three of many examples of learning methods:

- **History Learning Method:** You study the cultural background of all the people in a historic period to truly understand causes and results.
- **Science Learning Method:** You create theories based on repeatable results of scientific testing corroborated by multiple testing agencies.
- **Social Science Learning Method:** You make assumptions based on results of studies with control groups and statistically meaningful results.

When we hear a spiritual teaching, we need to use a **Spiritual Learning Method** to determine its truth. This involves at least four components:

- It must be found in multiple biblical references,
- It must be in harmony with the entirety of God's Word,
- It must be applicable to all generations and all cultures,
- It must be consistent with its placement in God's Meta Narrative.

There's an example of this in the book of Acts.

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.** Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. (Acts 17:12)



The Jews in Berea didn't just accept Paul's Gospel message. They listened intently and then searched the scriptures for themselves. Only when they found the message of the Gospel to be consistent with the scripture, did they believe in Christ.

The Bereans were exceptional because they had energetic and inquisitive minds. Although they already knew some of the Scriptures, they were open to learning more. Their spiritual method of learning is a model for anyone who truly wants to renew their minds.