



"God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could learn in no other way."

—C.S. Lewis

22-Aug-14

A Unique Curriculum (Part Two)

In Part One, we saw that [God](#) fashions our experiences, trials, and lessons for us on an individual basis, and as we learn from them, He desires that we help others get the most out of their experiences with Him. In [Romans 12:4-8](#), the apostle Paul reminds us that we need to help each other along the journey to God's Kingdom:

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the [grace](#) that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our [faith](#); or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows [mercy](#), with cheerfulness.

Paul counsels all Christians to use the gifts that God has given freely through His [Holy Spirit](#) to the benefit of their brothers and sisters in Christ. While our training and educational processes are individualized, we are all of one body. We may walk different paths, but relaying our perspectives, observations, and gifts from God to one another helps us participate together in reaching the wonderful goal God provides us.

Each week, we all come together before God, giving us another opportunity to receive spiritual instruction. On the [Sabbath](#), we hear messages from men who have devoted

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their lives to the study and sharing of the Word of God. Through the inspiration of God's Spirit, they serve us by preaching on a variety of worthwhile, spiritual, and often quite practical subjects.

Each person who hears, having a distinctive perspective, takes a slightly different understanding from each lesson. The subject may seem general to some, but to others, it is as if God were speaking directly to them. Questions they have been praying about may be answered in the course of the message, or a subject they have been studying suddenly becomes clear. God uses many tools to help each of us in our growth and understanding.

In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Paul informs us about the way the Holy Spirit works within the church:

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

School teachers use techniques that may work well in the overall educational process, but to be successful, they must learn the characteristics of each student. Some students may need more individualized attention to help them understand the subject matter. Therefore, a teacher may need to customize a curriculum to help them attain proficiency in their schoolwork.

None of this is new. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, David, Daniel, and many other faithful men and women walked distinctly different paths to grasp the lessons God wanted them to learn, acquiring knowledge and experience and evaluating what they had absorbed along the way. For instance, Peter had to learn that he needed to follow Christ and not worry about others' paths:

Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is

that to you? You follow Me." ([John 21:20-22](#))

Jesus had just explained to Peter what He wanted him to do: Feed and tend His flock. His path was uniquely different, and the lessons he had to learn were specific to him.

On the road to Damascus, Paul experienced a drastic change in his personalized lesson plan. The intensity of the education and training God used to fashion him into a fitting tool to [preach the gospel](#) is unique among the apostles. That approach prepared him for the rigors of his path and gave him the perspective on God's way of life that we glean from today in his epistles.

We have been blessed to hear [sermons](#) and sermonettes touching on these issues for years. Yet, we become energized when it becomes personal. God is speaking to each of us through the men ministering to us week in and week out. He has individually selected and trained each of them, using the same tools and customized instruction as He does with us.

Our Savior [Jesus Christ](#) was the most exceptional person ever born, and as such, He required a highly customized curriculum—far more rigorous than any of us have had to work through. He was intensely tested by [Satan](#), tested by the Pharisees, tested by lawyers, and tested by extreme suffering. He was also tested in the same ways that we are ([Hebrews 4:15](#)), and having scored perfectly on all His tests, He has become our pattern, our example.

So we can expect to be similarly tested on our knowledge and understanding, on our moral and spiritual character, and on our commitment and gratitude. Sometimes, it is like a multiple-choice test, where we have several choices before us, but only one will lead to the proper outcome. God is observing us at all times. He wants us to learn and understand, to develop the character of His Son and our Savior, so He gives us what we need. He grants us time to build up our knowledge base and to discover the errors in our thinking and behaviors. He allows us to experience and comprehend the consequences of our choices. It is a continuing process of education.

Our education begins at birth and continues throughout our lives, and in the same way, our training under God never stops. We will pass some tests and fail others. Just as He has for all of those who have gone before us, He will modify and customize our lessons whenever necessary, so each of us will have to endure a constantly changing curriculum. We can take heart in the encouragement the apostle James gives in [James 1:2-4](#):

Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your [patience](#) has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete. (*The Living Bible*)

- Gary Montgomery

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Image and Likeness of God \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh takes issue with errant Worldwide Church of God teachers who have mysticised and spiritualized God away into a shapeless, formless, vaporized, ethereal blob. These individuals have systematically rejected hundreds of scriptural references, dismissing them as figures of speech. In the foundational scripture establishing our purpose and vision (Genesis 1:26), God makes a distinction between animal and human form (tselem, shape, image) indicating that mankind was cast in His form or shape. Using human reason and metaphysical speculation, these misguided teachers claim that the prototype upon which these clay models are based does not really exist. Even though the concept of "image" eventually expands to character, the preponderance of scriptural references refer to a concrete specific shape or form. Paul, under the inspiration of God refers to earthly, celestial, and spiritual bodies (I Corinthians 15:40-49).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Preparing to Rule!](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Have you ever considered what it will be like right after Christ returns? What will you do, as a king, to help and govern the people placed under you? Believe it or not, you are already developing those skills!

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