

Editorial: Your third-most-important lesson

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So, what's the third-most-important lesson you've ever learned?



Marv Knox A couple of weeks ago, I asked you about [your second-most-important lesson](#). Since then, I've been wondering: What else have we got to learn?

Of course, we can't speak for each other. But I suggested we set aside the most important lesson anyone could learn: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

That freed me to suggest my second-most-important lesson: "You're not as smart as you think you are."

Until my sophomore year at Hardin-Simmons University, I assumed my white working/middle-class Texas Panhandle conservative Baptist Christian worldview was normative for everybody. I figured everyone everywhere who didn't agree with my values and perspectives was just plain wrong.

Julian Bridges, my sociology professor, blew that assumption to smithereens. He helped me contemplate culture, customs and worldviews foreign to my own. That notion has blessed my life every day since.

Thank God, because that led to my third-most-important lesson. It's what Baptists call the priesthood of all believers. I learned it in seminary from my church history professors, Bill Leonard and Glenn Hinson.

It's the idea every person is both privileged and responsible to approach God directly for wisdom and guidance. It means faithful Christians do not violate others' consciences. It's the foundation of religious liberty. It leads to concepts such as democracy and church autonomy.

It frees us to learn from one another. That's why I'm grateful to readers who responded to my invitation to tell us their second-most-important lessons. Here's a selection:

A trio of lessons / Mary Jo Maples

In 2005, I realized my second-most-important lesson was something I had known intellectually but had not experienced the truth of its implications.

After surviving what my surgeon called "one of life's catastrophes," I knew our times are in God's hands, life is fragile and we are vulnerable, and our greatest treasures are our family and friends who pray for us.

Mary Jo Maples is an online adjunct professor for Dallas Baptist University. She and her husband, Dick, a former Texas Baptist pastor, BGCT president, convention staff member and continuing DBU adjunct professor, now live in Guntersville, Ala., where they are members of First Baptist Church.

"What is man ...?" / Bob Campbell

My second revelation came because of my interest in astronomy. I was growing up in the "Space Age," and I was fascinated. Discoveries about space and the expansion of our universe were coming from every direction. Moon walks, the Big-Bang Theory, the universe is expanding at a rapid rate, knowledge that there were more galaxies outside the Milky

Way—literally billions of them.

All of this caused me to realize what the Psalmist said applied to me: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:3-4)

I realized how small I am in God’s creation. Yet he still cares for me. Amazing.

Bob Campbell is the retired pastor of Westbury Baptist Church in Houston and a former chair of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board. He now lives in Bloomington, Ill., where he is a member of Sherwood Oaks Christian Church.

The (Golden) Easter Egg Rule / Marinell Turnage

My own second-most-important lesson? “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” actually means “Do unto others what they like and want,” which is not necessarily what you like and want.

It’s OK if they like something else or don’t like what you like. They’re still an OK person, and so are you. I have had to learn this so many times. It sort of goes along with “No good deed goes unpunished.”

The time it smacked me upside the head was at a big family Easter gathering at our house. I assumed everyone loved hunting for hidden Easter eggs. How could they not? It’s so fun! Especially now that I had a 5-year-old granddaughter.

So, for their sakes (um-huh), I sneaked the three dozen hand-decorated eggs our brother and sister-in-law brought, hid them in our front yard, and later announced to the two-dozen or so family members it was time to hunt for eggs. No one budged. They sort of ignored me; kept visiting. Whatever.

The afternoon waned, and various ones began to leave, one car at a time, until only our brother and sister-in-law and their family were left, but the eggs they wanted to take back home still were hidden in the front yard. Their young adult daughter remarked, semi-disgustedly: “Come on, Mom. Let’s you and I go look for them.” I went outside with them and helped gather them up, trying to remember where I had put the last two. It was awkward.

Now, when I think someone else should like what I like, or I’m trying to figure out what they like, instead of “the Alamo,” I silently tell myself, “Remember the Easter eggs!”

Marinell Turnage is a paralegal with HighGround Advisors (formerly Baptist Foundation of Texas). She is a member of Lakeview Christian Church in Garland.

Own your mistake / Paula Kershaw

If you make a mistake, own it!

Paula Kershaw is a nurse at the Lillie J. Jackson Early Childhood Center in Lewisville, where she is a member of First Baptist Church.

Mystery of birth—and practice / Carl Hess

This morning, I saw a couple of young Mormon missionaries walking down a sidewalk and was reminded of your second-most-important lesson. If you and I had been born into a Mormon family, would we still be Mormons?

During the late 1970s, the first female pilot to be assigned to an Army combat aviation unit came into my unit in Panama, and she was Mormon. Although I was twice her age and her military superior, I didn’t try to change her religion—which would have been illegal anyway. But several years later, she told me she had left the Mormon religion.

In aviation training, we had several “laws of learning.” One was the law of “primacy,” which said those things we learned first would be difficult to change. Practice doesn’t make perfect; it makes permanent.

This may explain to some degree why Jesus had so little good response from the religious right of his day while the “heathens” flocked to his teaching.

Carl Hess is a retired U.S. Army chief warrant officer and Vietnam veteran who served as a helicopter instrument flight examiner. A longtime Baptist, he now lives in Ozark, Ala., where he is a member of First United Methodist Church.

Two lessons / Fran Smith

The heart is a lonely hunter.

They will know we are Christians by our love.

Fran Smith is a retired educator and member of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Lessons from mother / Gaylon Haigood

My mother had good one-liners for a little boy that I still live by at 73.

- You are as good as anybody but better than no one.
- The Good Lord takes care of the birds, but the worms do not fall in their nest.

Gaylon Haigood is a retired geophysicist, a deacon since 1975 and a member of First Baptist Church in Richardson.

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