

“ABC’s? Again?!”

Proverbs 4:1-7

Mark 10:13-16

I love this passage from Proverbs: “The beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom.” That’s it? You want wisdom so...just...get it? I mean – what? Where? How? You just get it. Of course, the passage continues, “Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.” Sure, sure...let’s pop ‘round the corner to the grocery store and just pick some up! I think it’s 80 cents a pound these days. Or do you need to go to a farmer’s market for wisdom and insight?

As a whole, the Bible is very pro-wisdom and knowledge – especially when it’s talking about studying scripture and learning about G-d. In Psalm 119, we hear, “Oh, how I love your teaching! I meditate on it all day long.” So, maybe we don’t quite make it up to that level of study, but when we look at this book, when we think about our lives of faith and what it means to follow Jesus – there’s just so much to know.

I remember when I was growing up, I would start a new school and I would feel confused and overwhelmed and...somehow littler. So many students and hallways and doors and teachers. How would I know where to go? What if I couldn’t keep up? But then, as time passes, you get the hang of it, right? You know your locker, you know the classrooms, you’ve got your buddies. You’re gonna be okay. And then, when you’re at the top grade of that school – it’s like you own the place. You’re walkin’ around, sayin’ hi, helping out the newbies and the world (or at least the school) is your oyster. This is a good feeling – you remember that feeling? And it only lasts – until you start that next school. And all of a sudden, you’re not queen of all you survey – you’re a freshman all over again.

This, I think, is sometimes what learning in faith feels like. We start off in an unfamiliar area, we gain our confidence, and then we think we know everything – until we go up just one more grade and it's like we don't even know what our feet are for. We grow, we get proud, we get humbled, and, hopefully, we have the gumption to keep learning and growing from there.

If you were wondering, the same thing happens in seminary. Most of the people that I knew who started seminary with me pretty much thought they knew what was what. They had lived faithful lives studying G-d's word, working out in the mission field, and had experienced the awesome mystery of suddenly knowing that G-d was calling them through seminary to some ministry out in the world. The thrill of that clarity left many in my year, shall we say, a bit over-confident about seminary. They already felt like they knew almost everything they needed to know.

And then...heh heh...and then in our first semester we all had to learn Hebrew. Intellectually, my classmates understood that this would be helpful – to learn the original languages of scripture; to be able to dig in deeper and grasp at the range of meanings that remain hidden in even the best translations. Intellectually, most of my classmates were in favor of this concept. In reality, though, here is a language from an entirely different language family, with a totally different grammatical structure, with hundreds of vocabulary words to learn, and it's not even the same alphabet! Not only did we have to learn our ABC's – again! – but we had to learn it all (the grammar, the vocabulary, the alphabet) in one semester so that we could spend the next semester doing translation work. Actually, we had to learn the alphabet before our first day of Hebrew class because what could we learn if we couldn't even read the words on the page?

So, in honor of all the times that we think that we know so much and G-d tells us, “you have so much more to learn, my child.” I want you to join me in the ABC's – again – this time in

Hebrew! We have a video of the song that we were taught in seminary to help us learn our aleph-bet. It's call and response so the woman will sing one line of letters and we'll sing what she says right after her. You all up for a challenge? Let's sing a new song – even if we don't get it just right.

[\[video\]](#)

May G-d bless your willingness to try something new! It's so often hard for us to go back to basics – to come to Jesus like a little child, knowing that we are not the expert or the boss. Jesus calls us to be servants and to be open to learn in love. To learn like a child is to know that there are universes beyond universes that we don't know – that the trinity and life and death and suffering and hope all contain mysteries that G-d holds and we approach with awe.

Later in the service, we will remember the tragedy of September 11, 2001. We will hold the victims in our hearts and stand at the edge of our understanding. And G-d will meet us there – G-d is always there where our knowing stops. And we will meet Christ at this table where we don't have to understand everything. Wherever we are in here, over here we experience G-d's love in Jesus Christ. Here we glimpse what is truly of value. Here we learn to be free in Christ's service. And each time we come to this table, G-d is working within us – building up what is righteous and knocking over our block-y towers that need to go back to the ABC's (again). And so, my friends, may we find eagerness to seek out those catchy alphabet songs that become the foundations for lives that bring glory to G-d. AMEN.