

HABIT ONE

Learn From Experience

*“God does speak — now one way,
now another — though man may not perceive it.”*

Job 33:14

The Christian who has learned how to learn from experience has embarked on a never-ending adventure of growth, marked by increasing personal fruitfulness and usefulness to those around him. God has been in the business of developing His sons and daughters long before we even thought of “leadership development.” To do this, He has used, among other things, each person’s own experience. Here we consider the habit of learning from experience.

God communicates in many ways as suggested by the verse at the top of the page. You will find in the next pages a credible case that one of the ways God speaks — indeed, develops us — is through our experience. We may have missed some of our potential lessons because we failed to perceive this. An “insignificant” or “coincidental” experience could have been a meaningful growth event in our life history.

Validity of Experience

God speaks to us chiefly through the Bible with its poems and sermons, but, by far, the largest part of the Bible is a record of

human experience. The revelation of God through narrative in the Bible confirms that experience is a valid way to learn about God and ourselves. As importantly, the study of that biblical record of experience is an important tool in interpreting our own experience.

Some Christians, we should note, overemphasize personal experience. By taking verses out of their contexts, they use the Bible incorrectly to prove what they feel their experience “taught” them. They use experience to interpret Scripture, instead of using Scripture to interpret experience. Others, in a legitimate effort not to portray Christian faith as merely subjective and experience-oriented, have hesitated to study the way God develops us through experience. Yet Scripture says we should “consider” human experience. “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. *Consider the outcome of their way of life* and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7 emphasis mine).

Not only the human experience recorded in the Bible, therefore, but all of human experience is a possible source of learning about God’s dealings with us. Therefore, understanding how to learn from experience, whether your own or someone else’s, becomes an important science — a research project with both objective and subjective elements. Some of us may need encouragement to learn from the experiences of others — we need to listen better or read more. Others may be out of balance the other way — willing to learn from the experience of others, but unwilling to recognize that our own experience, even while it is happening, is also one of God’s teaching tools. In this and subsequent chapters, you will read some personal anecdotes revealing how I learned through my experiences so you can learn how to learn through yours.

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When speaking of learning from experience, we are not talking only about what we learn by reflecting on the past, though learning from experience ought to include learning from past mistakes. It also involves staying aware of what God is saying at the time of the experience. If you can be alert to this dynamic, you will have an advantage over those who can only learn after the experience is over. Learning to ask and being willing to ask, “Lord, what are you trying to teach me through the experience I am having right now?” is a vital

exercise and discipline. Learning how to honestly ask that question is, in a sense, the goal of this chapter.

Changes in Our Perspective

When we are aware that God is continually teaching us, our perspective changes dramatically. We begin to seek God's purpose in everything, learning that in the profound sovereignty of God, at any juncture, He can show us what is best for us to do in view of unfolding circumstances. He is an excellent academic advisor, and the courses — situations developing around us — can be masterfully used by Him for our individual growth. Over time, we begin to notice the increased continuity between lessons He has already taught us, the ones He is presently teaching us, and our expectancy for the way God will train and develop us.

This learning process occurs because God initiates it and we respond. When He calls us to Himself and to His service, He calls us into a process with the lofty intention of developing us into all He knows we can be. As a consequence, we often become more than we thought we could. At the same time, His goals for us are consistent with our true potential which helps us avoid wasted, dashed, and unrealistic dreams.

With a little effort, we can gradually become more deliberate in accepting training from God and finally become intentional in even helping others learn how to receive the same training. As effective Christians experience God's ongoing developmental process, they find themselves better able to help others develop their potential for growth as well. We learn to identify younger Christians in whom God is beginning this process. Actually, it is a mark of a mature Christian that he or she discerns whom God is selecting and processing and finds ways to advance the process and enhance their development.

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I changed my perspective on learning through experience over 20 years ago in Robert Clinton's *Leadership Perspectives* class in graduate school. Some of the ideas expressed here were learned then. If you want to know more on this subject, I recommend his book, *The Making of a Leader*. Since learning these things, I am no longer free to complain about circumstances. I now must analyze and evaluate what can be learned from them. It helps me handle problems cognitively instead of emotionally. In the process of disciplining myself to always ask, "What am I to learn from this?" I complain less and learn more.

It's the Finish That Counts

We sometime lament our personal "disadvantages" and regret that we began our "race" so poorly. There are two things essentially wrong with such a melancholy reflection. One, God was watching over our birth context and family influences and has been working a divine purpose even through that. It was God, not man, who "... determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26). The setting of our birth and the families into which we are born are also a part of the personal growth process God has designed for each of us. If we complain about the "disadvantage" of where we were born, we are denying that God has the power to work in that situation — we are accusing God. If used correctly, our situation has advantages God prepared for us.

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Two, how we start the race is not nearly as significant as how we finish it. In the introduction, I mentioned that at age 55, I ran my first marathon. I have run 29 more since then. In each race, throughout the first 10 or so miles, I was usually passed by person after person. My third race was the Andy Payne Memorial Marathon — three times around Lake Overholser just west of Oklahoma City. The race began in a drizzling rain at 6:30 a.m. and ended in the heat of a sunny Oklahoma morning in May. At Mile 20, I began to count the people that passed me and how many I passed. To my surprise, no one passed me, and I passed

21 runners, most of whom were younger than I! Have you ever heard that a marathon race begins at Mile 20? I can well remember reflecting on the importance of the finish of the race, saying to myself during those last six and two-tenths miles as I passed those other runners, “The reason that I train is so I can do this.” I stopped feeling apologetic every time I passed someone and began to enjoy passing other runners — winning late in the race — in spite of the pain. I placed second in my age group with my best time until then — 3 hours, 43 minutes and 15 seconds (8 minutes, 31 seconds per mile for that race). More to my point, a year later, I won first place in my age group in that same marathon. I passed the man who won second place in the last 200 yards! I admit it is disheartening to be passed by so many during the earlier part of the race, but even with a tired body and aching muscles, there is joy in my heart to finish well. Our race in life as growing Christians is much like that. If we learn to endure, we can finish well, even if we didn’t start well.

At Mount Vernon Bible College, I had a gifted, prayerful, and zealous classmate. My wife, Char, and I knew him and his wife well. Char and his wife had been friends since childhood and during Bible college years. Char even traveled to youth camp one summer singing and ministering with them. Later, during our first years in Korea, Char and I worked under his supervision. He was intellectually talented, and there were numerous times his verbal and people skills impressed me. Nevertheless, years later and some years ago now, he divorced his wife and not too long after that married a wealthy lady 30 years older than himself. He did not leave his wife to marry the wealthy lady. However, having divorced then married one so much older than himself negatively affects his influence as an exemplary Christian leader. I grieve to think of his lost potential for meaningful Christian service. Receiving God-given material blessings is fine, but to manipulate circumstances in the pursuit of financial goals does not position him to finish well. He sprinted well earlier in the race — if only he were still pressing on to finish well.

On the other hand, most of us have observed some senior and seasoned believers doing very well, maturing further and further even late in life. Their spirits are strong and, as for the preachers among this group, their sermons are rich. To listen to such mature yet growing veterans is a joy; they speak from many years of continual growth with rich experience. We rejoice that they have not stopped growing, and their examples encourage us to finish well, too.

There are many people that seem to have advantages over us at the beginning of our races. We all can think of examples. My cousins had advantages I wished I had: better educations, more financial resources, better connections, and, it seemed, more native talent. Never mind. If we set our minds to finish well, we will view our life experiences as learning opportunities and run better and better as the years go by.

Long-term development and service flows out of who we are. We must maintain integrity and spirituality if long-range good is to flow out from us. Development that has peaked, ceased growing, or is set aside — disciplined by God — usually can be traced back to problems in spirituality. We must not stop growing inwardly. It's the finish that counts.

It Takes Time — a Long Time

Be patient with yourself. The increase of our spiritual influence is a long process. Understanding God's developmental process assumes that, throughout a lifetime, a Christian continues to increase in godly influence and experiences God's continued involvement in his growth.

My father was a pastor with a vision for opening new churches. At various times throughout my junior and senior high school days, we would travel to nearby towns to paint and repair roofs on old church buildings. Then Dad would find someone with a pastor's heart to serve in that church. Dad's "hobby" had no income and considerable expenses. To finance this, he would brush-paint houses and buildings in our hometown and the neighboring countryside. As I look back on it now, Dad and I spent literally hundreds of hours painting, working, and talking together during those years. During the school year, I would help paint after I was through carrying papers on weekdays. I helped on Saturdays, too. During the summer, I would paint until it was time for me to go to the newspaper office.

At the time, I thought my foot-loose cousins had advantages. Now I realize that it was I who had the advantages. I learned to work without allowing myself to be distracted. I learned that no sacrifice was too great to help build God's kingdom. I learned that serving God brought greater satisfaction and certainly more hope of reward in heaven than material gain. I learned to push myself, and my body and arms grew strong. I learned how to carry a ladder extended 40 feet into the air. I learned how to be

safe in potentially dangerous places. I learned to deal with working in high places. I learned how to remain composed on the top of a 40-foot ladder when wasps did not welcome me in the vicinity of their home. I learned how to calmly destroy the whole nest without jumping off. Through these experiences, I learned how to focus and stay focused. I learned the value of work. I also learned the value of laughter and rest. There is, of course, another set of possible lessons that could be learned by economically privileged persons like my cousins. The point is not that you need difficulties or disadvantages in order to learn, but that you must have a teachable attitude so you learn from whatever circumstances or experiences come your way.

Two further benefits give me cause to appreciate what happened in those years. One is that I experienced no distance between my father and myself. We remained friends throughout those years. He called me “pal” until he died. Upon reflection, I now know why I sometimes call my sons that. Secondly, he passed on to me the ability to value “things above.” Throughout this book, some of these values will resurface. The work ethic and spiritual values that I “inherited” from my dad during those years helped me work my way through Bible college and hold steady through the many years of public ministry since 1965. Some people do not appreciate the kingdom-related values Dad passed on to me, and this is their loss and my regret. In some vocations, supervisors help monitor our activities so we keep working. However, the ability to focus and monitor ourselves is something experience produces. How blessed I am to have learned how to do that during my high school years painting houses, barns, and churches.

Our growth process is more like a marathon than a sprint.

In the development of our potential, our growth process is more like a marathon than a sprint. What one thinks about, how one concentrates, how one remains focused and how one avoids listening to certain voices (aching muscles) all go into the hours of training for and running a marathon. In a sprint, it all happens much faster and is over in a moment. In the long process of our lifelong race, it helps if we learn to appreciate the adventure as it unfolds. The process of Christian development entails adventure, suspense, waiting, expectation, surprises, growth, setbacks, and victories. One of the keys is to realize it is a process and settle in for the long haul.

Personal Growth and Influence

How does learning how to learn from experience and then finishing well impact us practically? Your life will have more and better influence on those near you when you have spiritual authority. Spiritual authority belongs to those who are yielding to God's hammer and chisel at work in their lives. Being a good influence has less to do with vocation, position, or full-time professional ministry versus volunteer service. It has more to do with being a growing and godly person of character. The perception that a paid professional Christian leader is automatically more dedicated or influential than non-professional volunteers is false. Every Christian, not just the paid professionals, should seek to grow as a spiritual person, become a person of character, and develop spiritual authority.

Here is my definition of a growing Christian. This definition allows equal recognition of all persons regardless of position: A growing Christian serves God with God-given capacity and responsibility by disciplining himself to think, speak, and act with strict consistency. He is willing to confront and be confronted, has a teachable spirit, and seeks to influence others for good, doing everything to the glory of God. Such a person, because he has integrity, character, and spiritual authority, increases in ability to influence others for God's purposes.

When God is the great center around which all else revolves, our perspective is healthy — we do all for His glory. The Bible says we are to do whatever we do wholeheartedly as unto the Lord and this thought is included in this definition. The definition also includes the healthy idea of service to others. That is to say, we do everything as a service. It includes influence — some of us have larger spheres of influence than others, but this is only a difference in sphere size, not significance. We all are expected to be an influence for God. As we learn from experience, we increase in spiritual authority. As Christians all over the earth become their best, the reputation of the Christian's God is enhanced. More people will be eager to know the One they see in us.

Christian character increases influence. Throughout the Bible and the history of the expansion of the Christian Church in the world, we can see that godly people have served as people of influence. They have used God-given abilities to face God-given responsibilities and influence a group towards God's purposes for them. You can too, in your own God-given way. We all can learn how to be an influence to those around us. What are your

God-given abilities? What are your responsibilities? Who is in your sphere of influence? Can you serve them by influencing them toward God's purpose? Will you? God is training you so you can. God's training program for you will help you grow and increase your influence in your world — your sphere of influence — which is a part of His world.

God and Your Increase of Influence

God is committed to developing your influence. His training program includes a broad variety of factors such as people, meetings, lessons, circumstances, and tests that He uses to develop his workers. God knows the strength of the steel He is testing. In each test or lesson, the Master Mentor is fully aware of your potential, present strength, and the amount of stress, heat, or pressure you can and must endure to realize all of your potential. Furthermore, God's tempering processes are perfect. We can always pass the test. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to

man. God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. When you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (I Corinthians 10:13). This is our guarantee — we can pass every test. These statements have a sobering and logically necessary conclusion: it is our fault if we fail!

We often underestimate ourselves. We think we cannot bear the pressures in life that God knows we can. We moan and complain to God in prayer, but He holds our feet to the fire. When the learning experience is over, we find that God was right; we were wrong. We could and did make it — and are better off for it. God's most severe tests are His greatest compliments to us. Each test is God's way of saying to us, "You can take this — you can handle this. I know you can. I can develop you through this."

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Spirituality — the Goal of Development

Spiritual formation is the development of the inner-life of a person of God so the person experiences more of Christ — and less of himself. Gradually, we reflect more Christ-like characteristics in our personality and everyday relationships. We increasingly experience the power and presence of Christ working through us to encourage others toward God's purpose.

How do you grow in spiritual authority? Every time you slay a giant in your life, you become more confident and others recognize you more and more as a giant-slayer. Sometimes you will be unaware that you have spiritual authority — you just know what to do in spiritual situations and others recognize the rightness of your methods and advice. The rightness of your method and advice is the “badge” of your spiritual authority. Spiritual authority is developed through tests and experiences. It should be the central means of power for influencing others.

When I was five and six years old, I had rheumatic fever and was bedfast most of the summer between kindergarten and first grade. All during the first grade, I was not as strong as my classmates. Sometime during that year, I remember coming home alone from the church where my father and mother were the pastors. I very deliberately pulled a dining room chair into the center of the living room and knelt down to pray. In my hometown of Keokuk, Iowa, the boys at the local YMCA went on hikes once each week on a certain day. I had to be seven years old to go on this exercise. I knelt at the chair and prayed that when I turned seven, I would be able to go on those hikes.

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That next summer of 1951, my birthday fell on the very day that the hike was scheduled for that week. The day I turned seven, I went on my first YMCA hike! Not only was I happy that I was gaining in strength so I could make such a hike, but I was greatly impressed by the fact that God answered my prayer so well that the very day I turned seven, I went on that hike! The process of spiritual formation was beginning in my young heart. God had answered my prayer better than I had prayed it! As I look back on how God directed the affairs of my life, I can see that He began early to develop my respect for prayer.

The summer before, when I had been recovering from rheumatic fever, I was helping my grandmother fold the towels as we took them out of our new, electric clothes dryer. In the summer of 1950, that was quite a machine! I wrapped a towel around my head in what I thought a turban would look like. I announced to my grandmother that, when I grew up, I would go to Egypt, wear a turban like this, and tell the boys and girls there about Jesus. My grandmother responded immediately by saying, “Let’s pray about that.” Only my grandmother called me “Roland” — which is not my name. This is important because the line in the prayer that still stands out in my mind is, “Dear God, make our Roland to be the grandest missionary possible.” From then on, it was my desire to be the best missionary I could possibly be.

In the mid-1970s, my responsibilities as a missionary in Korea included directing a youth camp each summer. One summer, rainy weather dampened both our sports program and spirits. The campers’ clothes and our sleeping quarters wouldn’t dry out. In the intense humidity, bickering broke out between the pastors and schoolteachers who served as counselors. These two factions — the pastors and teachers — each had different ideas about how the camp should be run and what to do with the present difficulties. When it became apparent that these problems had no human solution, I took a day to fast and pray. After I saw to it that breakfast for everyone was completed and the morning teaching sessions had begun, I walked up a mountain path to a crevice shaded by small trees to pray. I was moved to tears as I confessed, “Lord, I have wanted to be a missionary all my life. If I cannot pray my way through these problems, I don’t deserve to be a missionary. If I can’t be a missionary, I don’t deserve to be in Korea.” I wept before the Lord. My grandmother’s prayer was very vivid before me: “the best missionary possible.” These words did not mock me; they challenged me.

Hours of prayer, supplication, and pleading passed. By late afternoon, the sky cleared, a fresh dry breeze blew softly, and campers were enjoying the sports program. I overheard one of the pastors remark how much the day had changed between morning and afternoon. I smiled to myself. Once again the power of prayer was driven home to me. A six-year-old child’s dream, a grandmother’s prayer, a six-year-old boy’s prayer and a seven-year-old boy’s hike were all part of the spiritual formation that prepared me for the challenge in those Korean hills and other even larger ones that followed in the cities. God still uses human experience to develop spirituality — the foundation of His workers’ ability to serve and influence. Years

after my grandmother had gone on to be with the Lord, her prayer was still influencing me.

Spirituality versus Skills

Let's compare spiritual development to skill development. Serving and influencing both flow out of who we are — out of “being” a spiritual person. Our being is the basis for our thoughts and actions and our doing flows out of that. Skill development, on the other hand, refers to development of any number of abilities that prepare you with the capabilities you need to do your trade well.

In my present line of work — training missionaries and pastors — it is comparatively easy to teach skills. It is possible to lead candidates through our program and equip them with conceptual tools for crosscultural ministry in the two years it takes to complete the program. A trained candidate is eight to ten years ahead of the untrained candidate who must learn his missiology by hard knocks and observation on the field. It is impossible, in two years, to develop a candidate spiritually so that he becomes a serving, compassionate, prayerful, patient, and kind person sensitive to God's voice, obedient to God's Word with a contrite heart and submissive spirit. It takes a lifetime to develop spiritually. Cognitive matters take only months to learn, but spiritual character takes years. The important spiritual issues flow more out of a lifetime of spiritual formation than from academic exercises. This is why God is at work through parents and other foundational influences, teaching obedience and developing character earlier. Later, God may use the Bible, Christian teacher, or seminary professor to deliver some skill training. So, even as you add skills to your spirituality, keep spirituality as your first priority.

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As you continue to pursue God's plan for serving Him, God forbid that you would relax in even the smallest way from pursuing spiritual formation. Pursue it with bulldog tenacity.

Every opportunity, large or seemingly small, is important. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” (Luke 16:10). As we succeed in the basics, God knows He can trust us with public successes. There are no little assignments.

Seeking and loving God personally is fundamentally important. We must never be more enraptured with our vision than with our Lord. When we seek God for who He is rather than for the ministry He may give us, we are developing spiritually. Our service to the Lord does better when it is not the first issue. When we seek, love, and worship God first, God knows that down the long road, our reputations will not be our god. We can be trusted to obey Him. Most of our wonderful projects begin by being done for the Lord. It is only very gradually that God’s projects become ours. Our challenge is to let each project remain His. The little things are important. Actually, they only appear to be little. How we handle them is a big indicator of our character.

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A Continual Process

A learning experience refers to anything in our life history that God uses to train us for service, build our faith, establish integrity, or teach submission and the seriousness of obeying God. Throughout this process, God is the One who is in charge of the learning agenda. He is the recruiter, screener, registrar, academic dean, academic advisor, course planner, curriculum committee chairman, and the one in charge of evaluation, testing, and eventually graduation. It is a lifelong process.

This process is going on whether or not we are aware of it. Recognition of the process can help us discern the line along which God is leading and developing us. A heightened awareness of the process and its end can help us work more effectively with God instead of fighting against Him. To make this process work best, we must learn to live with and habitually ask, “What is God teaching me through this experience?”

In the spring of 1996, after sitting through several interviews at Oral Roberts University (ORU), I realized I might well be invited to become a professor in the Seminary. I wrestled with the decision of whether or not to leave the mission field in order to train missionaries in the United States. With a sense of awe at the vastness of our missionary opportunities in mainland China and having developed my Chinese writing ability, I was very content in Beijing. I therefore pondered the most difficult choice I have ever had to make — whether to remain a missionary or become a trainer of the next generation of missionaries. One day I confessed, “Lord, I would really rather stay on the field,” at which time the Lord clearly replied, “And that is why I need you in the classroom!” From then on, I knew God wanted me at ORU. That experience taught me that the Lord of the harvest who sends also has the right to recall — I did not have the right to assume I would always be wherever I was at the time. I also learned again that ministry was not my god, God was — an important lesson relearned many times.

My hesitancy to leave the field and begin to serve in the classroom in my home country had nothing to do with the value I placed on training missionaries. Rather, it had to do with my great love for missions and my contentment to be involved abroad. I now live with the tension between knowing I am in the will of God in the classroom although I have a passion and preference for field work. Yet, I would rather live with that tension and give my students the opportunity to catch my zeal for fieldwork than to become too content in the classroom and produce insipid students.

I am academically oriented and require excellence from my students. Nevertheless, my experience on the field and love for the field is more important to me than academics. Accredited seminaries are known for academic, scholarly, educational, and intellectual attainment. These are things I, too, love and they ought to be maintained. However, they are not as important as spirituality and character. Without these, no Christian worker will succeed in God’s eyes no matter how academically successful he or she is.

We thank God for what we can learn from teachers and books, but God’s program is more comprehensive than just that. It includes many affirming experiences from which you will gain confidence. It includes some hard experiences where you will learn to depend more completely on Him. His perfect process for the development of your character and increase of your influence has been in operation since before you were born. As we learn how He works, each day we become more “... confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion

until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). When we learn how God uses our own experience to develop us, we are more apt to catch the message He has encoded in it. Our experiences are the “illustrations” in God’s teaching scheme. Finding the “point” of each illustration is the challenge for us to discover, the quest of the attentive learner, and the prize for the skillful player.

The Bigger Picture

God’s training program is designed to produce a corps of trusted statesmen — kings and priests — to administer the affairs of His eternal kingdom. To them He will delegate responsibilities as vice-regents, and they will be trustworthy under His authority forever. This is the ultimate purpose of God’s training program on earth. However, there are two common misconceptions which confuse our thinking on this point, and therefore sidetrack some of us from full participation in the training.

The first is what might be called “process philosophy.” Those who hold this view focus on the training process as process — they are preoccupied with the interaction between people and circumstances. They over-emphasize human autonomy and see God as rather uninvolved. They believe that life is just a process, and whatever meaning they see in it is only for the here and now. Because they lack the bigger picture, they fail to understand that this life is only the training ground for our responsibilities in God’s eternal kingdom. They miss the double action of living an earthly life for God’s glory and simultaneously being trained through it for the eternal one.

Others among us are “determinists” who believe God has every move planned. They only think they are making the decisions, but it’s really God who controls everything, pulling all the strings of His puppets. Because they deny the role of the free will God has given us, they also misunderstand the training aspect of earthly life. They fail to understand that their response to God’s training program is a major part of the training. So neither the process philosophers nor the determinists have it right.

The balanced Christian position is a combination of both God’s detailed involvement and human autonomy (free will). God is keenly interested in how we respond to Him, since the development of statesmen is a great concern of His. Refined kings and priests are His highest form of creativity, His most beautiful art, His best poem. Without denying the drama of life

in the training program, the greater drama to be eventually played out in our perfected role as statesmen in the Kingdom is infinitely more important. This perspective gives us the patience to go through the present discipline, joys, sorrows, highs, and lows. We know the experience is merely preparatory. We are happy to live each experience to its fullest and get all we can out of each one. This is because we know the process is ordered by a God who is very involved and yet trusts us to correctly exercise our free will. However, there is often a little bit of the process philosopher in us — we sometimes forget God is highly involved in the process and that to resist the process is to resist God. There is a little bit of the determinist in us, too. We sometimes forget that we have a free will and that God is watching for our measured, positive response to the training He provides in the circumstances and people around us.

The process philosophers miss the goal of the training program, and the determinists miss their responsibility in it. Those of us with a balanced view, however,

are positioned to embrace our experiences with the greatest enthusiasm. We have the deepest appreciation of life events because we know the purpose behind them. For us, all experiences, even the ones that seem unimportant, are opportunities to grow. If we miss these opportunities to progress, they become occasions for regress. Each experience is a new opportunity to demonstrate submission, obedience, and understanding of delegated

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authority. We understand our Father, His goals for eternity and for us, the purpose of the training program, why we are in it, and the importance of delayed gratification. We can be patient through the training process. We cultivate the habit of learning through experience, because we anticipate graduation — a truly glorious coronation.