

Series - Unhindered

#5 - You've got to Unlearn What You Think You Know, so You Can Relearn What You Need to Know.

Philippians 3:7-12; Matthew 5; 1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 1:20; Jer. 29:11; 2 Chron. 7:14; Rom. 8:28

Introduction: On January 28th, I began a series of messages based on our vision for this year – “UNHINDERED.”

That word comes from the last two verses in the book of Acts, chapter 28, verses 30-31 in the KJV says, ***“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”***

The last four words in the KJV says—‘*no man forbidding him,*’ translate into one word in the original language, the adverb... **“UNHINDERED.”**

So, in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) it reads, ***“Now Paul stayed two full years in his own rented lodging and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”***

We began by taking a journey through the book of Acts, which is the story of the early church, and identified [Five Characteristics of an Unhindered Church](#). An unhindered church is a [praying church](#), a [powerful church](#), a [pure church](#), a [persecuted church](#), and a [praising church](#).

The church is the people, you, and I; and if the church is to be unhindered, we personally need to be free from the things that hinder us.

“UN” is a prefix used in English to form verbs expressing a reversal of some action or state, (unbend; uncork; unfasten, etc.), or to intensify the force of a verb already having such a meaning (unloose).

So far, we've looked at:

Getting **Unshackled** from the Weight of **Anxiety**

Getting **Unburdened** from the Demands of **Religion**

Getting **Untangled** from the Dangerous Web of **Unbelief**

Today's message is one that I've been reflecting on for months.

You've got to Unlearn What You Think You Know, so You Can Relearn What You Need to Know.

Let's PRAY

Anyone who has observed a young child mimic the behavior of others knows how naturally children learn from their environment. Unlearning, on the other hand, takes maturity, discipline, courage, and humility.

Futurist Alvin Toffler wrote: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Jim Collins, author of the book, Good to Great wrote, *"The most important lessons lay not in what I needed to learn, but in what I first needed to unlearn."*

ILLUST: Bike riding offers a good illustration of the difficult process of unlearning. The logic behind the common phrase *"it's like riding a bike"* suggests it's relatively easy to learn—and then easy to remember.

I want to show you an episode of Smarter Every Day, where the show's host, Destin Sandlin, reversed a bicycle's steering mechanism so that turning the handlebars to the left would steer the bike to the right and vice versa.

Show YouTube Video: "The Backward Brain Bicycle, smarter Every Day 133; 7:58 minutes. [Stop at the 7-minute mark]

To truly learn anything new—rather than finding further evidence of what we already believe—the first thing we need to learn is how and what to unlearn.

The Encyclopedia of Neuroscience says, **Unlearning is neither forgetting nor removing old information, experiences, or ways of thinking; instead, it is building new patterns of synaptic communication that can support different ways of thinking. To store new information into our neural networks, our brains need to create new synapses and then repeatedly use these new synapses so that they become operative as part of the permanent architecture of our brain's neural network. The saying in neuroscience, "Neurons that fire together wire together," means we only really learn what we spend time thinking about."**

[Encyclopedia of Neuroscience, T.H. Brown, Y. Zhao, V. Leung 2009, Pages 1049–1056.]

The Apostle Paul might very well be the patron saint of “unlearning.”

Paul was born in Tarsus around 3 A.D. His father was a Roman. Therefore, he was born a freeborn citizen of Roman. His Jewish name was Saul, and his Roman name was Paul. Paul was a tentmaker by trade.

Because he was reared in a Greek and Roman environment, Paul received a thorough education in: Greek language, History, and Culture.

In Acts 22:3, he says, ***“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God...”***

In Romans 11:1 he says, ***“. . . For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.***

In Philippians 2:5, he says, ***“Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee.***

Paul was a Pharisee. The name “Pharisee” means “the separated ones, or separatists.” Pharisees are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but they are mentioned dozens of times in the New Testament. They were a strict religious group of Jews who advocated minute obedience to the Jewish law and traditions. I mean, they crossed every “t” and dotted every “i.”

Pharisees believed:

- a. In the resurrection of the body.
- b. In the existence of Heaven and Hell, angels, and spirits.

Pharisees rejected Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah because:

- a. Jesus did not follow their traditions.
- b. He associated with notoriously wicked people.

Paul says in Galatians 1:13-14 “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. “

Paul was a man of zeal and faithful to his beliefs. Philippians 3:6 – “. . . **Concerning zeal, persecuting the church . . . Concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless.**”

He had learned a way of seeing the world as divided among Gentiles, Jews, and apostate Jews who followed a man called Jesus Christ.

In the ninth chapter of Acts, Paul was “breathing murderous threats” while traveling to Damascus to detain and imprison followers of Jesus when “a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him” (Acts 9: 1,3). Then, a voice that his companions could not hear addressed Paul and “for three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:9).

While still in this state of total blindness, Paul’s companions “led him by the hand” the rest of the way to Damascus, where God instructs a Christian named Ananias to go help Paul (Acts 9:8).

Ananias argues with God and says, “**Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem**” (Acts 9:13). Ananias eventually has a change of heart, goes to find Paul, and places his hands on Paul’s head, and “**immediately things like scales fell from [Paul’s] eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength**” (Acts 9:18-19).

For Paul, a highly intelligent, educated, and driven individual, it is noteworthy that his transformative breakthrough taught him that unlearning often requires the courage as well as the humility to open oneself to the wisdom and support of others whose experiences, abilities, and convictions differ from our own.

Everything Paul had accomplished under the Old Covenant was nothing but garbage. His old way of thinking and living was now worthless.

He says as much in his letter to the believers in Philippi.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.
(Philippians 3:7-12, NIV)

Later in Acts 15, Paul, along with Peter, and James, convince the church leaders in Jerusalem that Gentiles did not have to participate in God's covenant with Israel as a prerequisite to participating in God's New Covenant established by Jesus.

We need to follow the example of the apostle Paul, and be willing to unlearn, so that we can relearn to fully embrace kingdom values, kingdom ethics, and the kingdom message that Jesus commissioned us to proclaim.

Pastor and author Mark Batterson said, **“Half of learning is learning. The other half of learning is unlearning. Unfortunately, unlearning is twice as hard as learning, and often takes twice as long. It’s more difficult to get old thoughts out of your mind than to get new thoughts into your mind.”**

The necessity of unlearning is the challenge Jesus faced as He taught about the Kingdom. If you study the teachings of Christ, you’ll see that for His disciples to learn, they first had to be challenged to unlearn. This is why two phrases are repeated over and over in the Sermon on the Mount.

“You have heard that it was said...” “But I tell you...”

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.”

(Matthew 5:21-22, NIV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28, NIV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” (Matthew 5:38-39, NIV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”

(Matthew 5:43-44, NIV)

Jesus is showing us that half of spiritual growth is unlearning what we think we know. The other half is learning what we don't know.

I'm not talking about abandoning the truth of God's word or replacing biblical facts with current day wokism. But here two main areas that I believe we need to work on. What we think we know about the Word and the Spirit.

I. Unlearn and Relearn the Truth of God's Word

Why do Calvinists believe in predestination, yet Wesleyans believe in free will? How can they both look at the same Scriptures and see two different things? It's because of a bias in their lens of interpretation.

If we are truly honest with ourselves, we must admit that we all have preconceived ideas about certain things in the Bible. This means we all have ideas and understandings that we need to set aside if we truly want to understand the Bible.

If you were raised as a Catholic, you were taught to see the Bible through a Catholic lens. If you were raised a Baptist, you were taught to interpret Scripture with a Baptist lens. Pentecostals have one lens and Presbyterians have another

lens. The challenge is learning how to set aside that lens of interpretation and see the Bible with fresh eyes, like you are reading it for the first time.

Proverbs 3:5 NKJV ***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;”***

We are told not to lean on our own understanding. Instead of looking at a verse or passage with the mindset that you already understand what it’s about. Try looking at it through the eyes of a child who is reading it for the first time.

Story of Kid’s, what constitutes genius?

The Bible says God humbled the children of Israel and allowed them to get hungry, then He gave them manna to eat, and this example was given to teach the people to live by the word of God.

Deuteronomy 8:3 NKJV; ***“So, He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.”***

We need to approach the Word of God with the same humility as the Israelites did with the manna. Take a moment to consider the giving of manna in the wilderness. The Israelites called the bread from God “manna.” The word manna literally means “what is it?”

The children of Israel humbly ate the bread that God provided even though they didn’t know what it was. This is how we should approach the Scriptures as well. We need to come with the mindset that we don’t have the knowledge or understanding, but we are hungry for truth, and we have a desire to be fed by the word of God.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2 NKJV, ***“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”***

When we approach the Scriptures with humility, we are posturing ourselves to receive instruction. A disciple sits at the feet of the Master in a place of humility that will allow you to learn.

So, the first thing every Bible student must do is learn how to approach the Bible with humility, by setting aside any preconceived ideas or biases you might have, and look at the Bible with fresh eyes, like it's your first time reading it.

2 Timothy 2:15 NRSV says, ***“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.”***

We should all desire to rightly explain the word of God. This is why understanding the difference between Exegesis and Eisegesis is so important.

Eisegesis means “to lead into”, and Exegesis means “to draw out from”.

When you read something into a Biblical text that was not intended by the author, you are doing Eisegesis. You are imposing your ideas onto the text. This is what happens when you ask yourself, ***“what does this verse mean to me?”***

2 Timothy 4:3–4 NKJV, ***“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”***

2 Peter 1:20–21 NKJV, ***“knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”***

The correct way to interpret Scripture is known as Exegesis, which means “to draw out”, indicating that we are drawing out the true meaning from the text.

Exegesis is defined as the careful, systematic study of the scripture to discover the original, intended meaning of the text.

Where Eisegesis asks the question, ***“what does it mean to me?”***

Exegesis asks, “what does the Holy Spirit want us to understand?”

Exegesis is concerned with discovering the true meaning of the text.

Eisegesis, however, is only concerned with making a point.

A great question to ask ourselves is, ***“Am I allowing the Word and the Spirit to challenge my thinking, or am I only interested in confirming my own ideas?”***

If you are just looking for proof-texts to support your theory, then you’re imposing your ideas onto the Bible instead of letting the Bible lead your understanding.

Example of Sunday PM teaching on Psalm 23 (Verse 2), ***‘He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.’*** It is interesting that the very first thing the shepherd does for the sheep is, "Makes me lie down..."

If we want to interpret the Bible correctly, we need to let go of any preconceived ideas we have, and let the Bible interpret itself. The most important thing to keep in mind when studying the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, it’s all about Jesus.

Luke 24:27,44-45 NKJV, ***“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”***

Jesus told the religious leaders they were missing the real truth of the bible, He said, John 5:39 NKJV ***“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”***

Examples:

A. Jeremiah 29:11

This is one of the most popular verses in the Bible and many Christians apply its promise to their current situation. If you think God has plans "to prosper you and not to harm you" and that he "plans to give you hope and a future," think again. That's not your promise to claim. It's not your covenant to keep.

Jeremiah 29:11 is part of a letter that Jeremiah wrote to the Jewish exiles in Babylon around 594 BC. False prophets were telling the exiles that Babylon would soon be defeated and that they would be returning to their homeland within a

couple of years. Jeremiah corrects the false prophets and explains that Babylon would be in power for about 70 more years and that the exiles should make Babylon their home and prepare for a long stay. The exiles receiving the letter would likely die in Babylon, along with their children. It would be their grandchildren or great-grandchildren who are finally allowed to return home.

This verse doesn't guarantee that God will make every Christian wealthy, have a dream job, meet the perfect spouse, and be physically and mentally healthy. This is not a verse that guarantees a pain-free life.

Can this promise be applied to New Testament believers today? First, I think it's safe to say that any moral command from the Old Testament that is repeated in the New Testament is an example of a 'timeless truth.'

What we do learn from these verses is that God keeps His promises to us. Even though the Jews were exiled because of their sins, God did not abandon them. Second, as Christians, God has promised us that no matter what happens on earth, those who trust His Son Jesus Christ will spend eternity with Him.

Your new-covenant promises are far better. Jesus promised his followers, "***I am with you always***" ...Beginning right now, until the end of the age.

B. 2 Chronicles 7:14

This was a message for King Solomon after he completed the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. God was reiterating his commitment to the covenant he'd established with the nation of Israel in the days of Moses.

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Now, how do Christians embrace and apply this today?

First, "my people" are no longer merely the Jewish, ethnic people of God, but the blood-bought people of the Messiah united to Jesus by faith.

And, **secondly**, the reference— **“heal their land”** — now refers to the church bought by the blood of Jesus, which is a pilgrim people drawn from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

God doesn't have a covenant with any nation, He has a covenant with YOU! A better covenant. A permanent covenant. A covenant established in the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you're comfortable using Old Testament warfare and conquest narratives to support your "Christian" posture toward culture and the people in it, you've got some unhitching to do. If you're more energized by the failure of your enemy than you are broken over their lostness and troubles, even when it is self-inflicted, you have some unhitching to do.

If making your point on social media isn't making any difference but alienates people from taking our Christian faith seriously because your tone leaves readers wondering if you really are a Christ follower, you've got some unhitching to do.

When we reach back to claim what isn't ours to claim, we diminish the value and significance of what is yours to claim. I wonder if our heavenly Father is troubled when we opt for a covenant established with the blood of goats and sheep over the covenant established through the blood of his Son.

2 Corinthians 1:20 says, ***“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.” (NIV)***

That means that in union with Christ, Christians become heirs of all the promises of God. Here is the way Paul puts it in Philippians 3:3, ***“For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”***

And what he means when he says, “we are the circumcision,” is: We Gentiles who are united to Jesus are the true circumcised people, the true Israel of God. And, therefore, all the promises made to the true Israel, belong to us, Jew, and Gentile in Christ Jesus.

C. Romans 8:28

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. We often interpret “good” in our own way, according to our own self-interest.

But Paul doesn’t stop at verse 28. He goes on to say, ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”***

In other words, the way that God is going to use all things for good is to use them to conform you to the image of His Son. His Son who just so you know, ***was made perfect by the things which He suffered.*** The good God will work isn’t all just sunshine and roses, it’s thunderstorms and thorns.

Many promises in the Bible were made to other people, but we can learn from them. They’re profitable for us. ***“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*** (NIV)

II. Unlearn and Relearn the Truth of the Holy Spirit.

Different churches tend to emphasize the Holy Spirit in different ways. Charismatic and Pentecostal churches focus on his power, evangelicals tend to emphasize the Spirit's work in bringing attention to Jesus Christ, and Roman Catholics focus on the Holy Spirit working through the church hierarchy.

1. The Promise of the Holy Spirit!

John 16:7 — ***“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate (Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*** (NIV)

A. The promise of Jesus reveals our need! Jesus promised His disciples a counselor, a helper, a senior partner; because He knew they couldn't handle life successfully without help — ***and neither can we!***

B. The promise of Jesus reveals the Holy Spirit's nature!

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as a — counselor, or comforter!

The Greek word is Parakletos! It is an incredibly rich word in the Greek language.

- The word Parakletos was used in the legal arena to describe a defense attorney, or a character witness in a trial!
- The word Parakletos was used to describe a specialist in any field who could come in and supply the missing knowledge or insight needed to solve a perplexing problem!
- The word Parakletos was an encourager who knew the right thing to say or do when a person was suffering or discouraged!

Note that a Parakletos wasn't something — a Parakletos was someone. When Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, He used personal pronouns like — "he and him!" The personal nature of the Holy Spirit can be seen in 2 Corinthians 13:14, where Paul writes: ***"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*** (NIV)

We have the promise of the Holy Spirit and secondly, we see...

2. The Priorities of the Holy Spirit!

A. The Holy Spirit wants to help us — get right! (Salvation)

John 16:8 — ***"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment..."***

B. The Holy Spirit wants to help us - grow right! (Sanctification)

Healthy ***babies*** grow. Healthy ***believers*** grow — being born again or born from above speaks of a beginning not an end!

C. The Holy Spirit wants to help us — go right! (Service)

Acts 1:8 — ***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*** (NIV)

The Greek word translated 'Power' is 'dunimous' — where we get our English word 'dynamic' and 'dynamite.' The real meaning of the word is more than explosiveness — it was a word that literally meant — ability! The most basic meaning is — The ability to do whatever needs to be done!

In Acts 8:15-17 Peter and John are sent to Samaria, where believers have already received the regenerative Spirit, yet on that occasion Peter and John come down so that they might receive the Holy Spirit as in Acts 2:4.

Later Paul comes to the Ephesians and says, ***“Having believed did you receive the Holy Spirit?”*** He is talking about Holy Spirit Baptism.

Acts 2, 8, 10 and 11, Acts 9 and 19 clearly show us what is called the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues.

The position as Pentecostals is not that we have the Spirit, but others do not. Every Christian has the Spirit of God. The question is whether we have had in addition to the saving work of the Spirit, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit in our life.

Conclusion: The Word and the Spirit, we’ve got to begin by making sure we get this right. We might have heard it said, but what is Jesus now saying, and are we willing to unlearn, so that we can relearn.

Remember, God has a covenant with YOU! A better covenant. A permanent covenant. A covenant established in the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.