



Do Learn

“Intelligent people are always ready to **learn**. Their **ears** are open for knowledge.”

– Proverbs 18:15

“Kelly, God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason!” I’m pretty certain I’m not the only one who heard this “wonderfully encouraging” piece of wisdom from their mother growing up. For the life of me, I can’t fathom what she was trying to imply either... (insert the sarcastic and rolling of the eyes emoji right here). No, I definitely knew what she was saying to me! I didn’t come into this world with a natural desire to listen... I wanted to get my point across!

But for those of us who know Christ, we are called to something different. We are called to Love Him and Love others and to accomplish that, we must become students... we must become learners! When we look in God’s Word we see how God connects learning with listening, something I clearly lacked as a child and am still developing to this day. When we take the time to step into someone else’s world with our ears, we learn more of what it means to be like Christ.

Our prayer and desire for teams that come on a short-term trip to Jonestown is that you make a choice to come as a Learner! But what does that mean and what does that look like? Author and Missionary, Duane Elmer, defines **Learning** as “The ability to glean relevant information about, from and with other people.” I love that! In his book, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, he gives great insight into each one of these areas of Learning!

Learning about others

- “Learning about helps us check and better adjust our expectations against reality. Learning about should generate questions that will help us probe more deeply into the culture once we arrive.”
- “A prepared list of questions and issues to probe more deeply will allow you to enter many information-rich conversations. Learning about gives us an initial orientation to a new culture – it’s a great place to start.”
- “However, the major danger of learning about is that we may think, even unconsciously, that now we know the people of the other culture. We can turn others into objects. We can create dependent relationships. We can form stereotypes...”

So we must not stop here...

Learning from others

- “When we learn from someone, it is one of the great honors we bestow on them. When we ask questions, seek understanding and probe their thoughts, we are saying, in effect: I need you to teach me. I can’t do this alone.”
- “The act of listening shows respect for the speaker and helps build a sense of community.”

“Asking others to teach us not only honors them but also gives them permission to tell us what they actually see, feel, know, and experience.”

But, let’s keep going...

Learning with others

- “This wonderful form of learning assumes that the best learning happens in relationship, in mutuality, in partnership where neither side is above or beneath.”
- “Respectful interaction between two people benefits both. Each depends on the other. This interdependence produces a kind of life together that regularly mediates Christ, each to the other.”
- “By learning from and with each other, we sharpen our vision and practice in ways that could never happen alone. We need each other. Our connected lives and cultures make us better people.”

Further Reading:

Matthew 9:13 – Then he added, “now, go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

John 6:45 – As it is written in the scriptures, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and **learns** from him comes to me.

Small Group Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced a learning opportunity in another culture before? Discuss that experience with your group. What did you learn? How did God change you? What did you learn through listening?
2. Learning about –
 - a. Take some time to prepare your own personal list of open-ended questions. What are some things you are curious to learn about from our local community in Jonestown?

b. Pick one or 2 learning options below and begin prayerfully asking God what He could teach you through this mission experience:

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Jonestown-Mississippi.html>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonestown,_Coahoma_County,_Mississippi
- <http://www.coahomacounty.net/>
- <https://coahoma.msghn.org/>
- <http://www.coahoma.k12.ms.us/>

3. Learning from/with –

Take some time to pursue a learning experience with someone from your local community that is from a different culture than you. What did you learn? What questions did you ask? What, if any, hesitations did you have?