

# Journals and Journeys Through the Bible: Using Learning Journals in Teaching Biblical Studies

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My earliest childhood play acting revolved around Church and school. Naturally, these were the major highlights of my week. The intersection of religion and education as a professional career only became clear in my adulthood. The first time I saw a title that went something like, Professor of Hebrew Bible was when I enrolled for a postgraduate degree in Hebrew Bible in Boston. Each time I stand before a classroom or contribute to this academic field, I am aware of the strangeness of the role. I am no stranger to things of the Church – faith, religion, belief, belonging, rules, and morals. Classrooms are one of few social gatherings where I don't blend into the background. Yet the Biblical Studies classroom challenges me as a teacher. As a student, I flourished in these classrooms. To avoid the mistake of teaching the way I learned, I revisited key moments in my learning and the geographical places where I learned to chart my journey as a learner-teacher. The learning journal gives me a visual of myself as an adult learner, easily hidden from my teaching self.

A bit past the mid-point of my teaching career, the bravado of my early years has cooled into a moodiness that questions the point of it all. The first semester of Biblical Studies at Seminary takes a toll on everyone. Well, to be honest, the first weeks of that semester. In those days, I am a puzzle to students. They reach out to my colleagues quietly asking, "is he really Christian?" And I, by the middle of the semester confessed to my friends that if alcohol lifted my mood, then I would be having at least two rounds of drinks after each class.

In a cold war, the zones of conflict are everywhere. In the Biblical Studies classroom, tensions lie beneath the surface. Conflicts rage in the stubborn refusal to accept new knowledge. And red markups trigger traumas of academic inadequacy. Years later, students will testify to their breakthroughs and transformation

in how they approach the Bible. As they recall these new practices, they also recall the pain that came with their learning. Thrilled by the slow growth, I am wounded by the scars they now feel free to reveal.

In the moodiness of mid-life, journals form part of my therapeutic process. Teachers in several disciplines, particularly professional disciplines, use learning journals (Stevens and Cooper, 2009). This surprises me but my surprise gives way to a knowing affirmation about the reasons for the scarcity of learning journals in a Biblical Studies class. The volume of information I would like to impart in a semester leaves little room for processing through a journal. Only the minimum of time set aside for reflection will do. On the first day of class, I ask students to write short notes to themselves: "What does the word Bible mean to you?" and "How do you understand biblical authority?" On the last day of class, we return to these questions to see how they have grown. Less the process of a learning journal and more the indicator of how well I did in changing their minds. I am only interested in one form of growth that of informational learning (Stevens and Cooper 2009, 37). Little did I know that by privileging informational learning, I was also fostering a surface approach to learning. (Kember, Wong, Yeung 2001, 14).

I have always thought of my teaching as making a difference. Bringing the light of knowledge to those who are in darkness, as my colonized education disposed me to think about learning. Or I felt accomplished if I did various forms of banking education whether directly or indirectly (Freire 2005, 109). At least I guided them to new information. The development that matters occurs in the weeks of the semester a student takes a class with me. For as long as I ignore the testimony of trauma (yes, deliberately overused here) from my former students, I could continue to be-

lieve this dictum. Even more, as long as I continue to ignore my own experiences, I couldn't see myself as a lifelong learner in a way that was not the trite, "we learn new things everyday" sort of way (Drago-Severson 2004, 18).

*How was your mind changed? The older Hebrew Bible professor asked me around the first time he met me.*

*What are you talking about? I answered curiously.*

*About homosexuality and the Bible. How was your mind changed? He continued, sensing either vulnerability or a genuine teachable moment.*

How did I change my mind? That question marked a pivotal point in my growth as a Biblical Scholar. Growth... we change, we develop, we think differently, we believe differently. "When I was a child, a thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became an adult" (1 Cor. 13:11). I stumbled an answer to that question. Almost fifteen years after that exchange, the best answer I could come up with is, I don't know; my mind changed, I developed, and I keep changing. My non-reflection upon my learning convinced me that what I learned was more important than how I learned. Never before was I either asked how I learned or reflected on how I learned (Drago-Severson 2004, 19).

Thinking about journals in Biblical Studies forced me to retrace my learning development I have kept a mental journal of my development as a learner and teacher of the Bible. For this entry, I make several visits to my past, and through them I reconstruct an actual journal of my learning related mostly to Genesis 3 and some other biblical texts. The practice is illustrative of the learning journal that I could have been keeping from those early days. Here these journeys to the past, serve as an example of the learning journal that can accompany courses in Biblical Studies.

SCARBOROUGH, TOBAGO Date 04/23/1980

When I looked for confirmation in Gen for the name of the fruit in the garden I surprised to see that there is no name for the fruit. I wanted to use this as a quiz question in my Sunday school class. I read Gen. 3 almost three times and it only says "the fruit". Has come I thought it was an apple? Where does apple come from if it is not in the BIBLE!! What else that I thought was there in the Bible that is not really there?

I started teaching Sunday School in the Methodist Church at thirteen years old. At that time, I was halfway through High School in the educational system the British imposed upon its colonies. Although, we were several years into the post-colonial period,

SCARBOROUGH, TOBAGO Date 11/17/1985

We are reading John Milton's PARADISE LOST in English class. Milton says that the fruit in the garden of Eden is an apple. The Bible doesn't say "apple." Why does Milton say it is an apple? Where did he get that from? I know that Milton adds a lot of stuff that is not in the Bible but his version feels more familiar than the real Bible. His account of the fall from heaven reads like the story I know. There is no expulsion from heaven or the creation of the devil in Genesis. In why is Milton so influential even more than the Bible?

Church and education still carried all the marks of the colonial era. Bishop's High School in Tobago still has the reputation of an elite grammar school where high performing students attend based on merit in rigorous exams done at eleven years old. Thirteen marks the age of my first critical encounter with the Bible. Reading the texts for myself showed me the difference between what was actually written and what I was told was there. By the time I was seventeen, I explored issues common to first year Seminary courses in preparation to enter Seminary in Jamaica a few years later. The normal disruptions of Seminary came to me before my first Bible class in Seminary. They were not really disruptions to me since I had little investment in ideas of inerrancy as part of my faith formation. In fact, my emerging adult faith was based upon a critical and somewhat rigorous view of the Bible. That is not to say, I didn't experience angst or have my foundations shaken with more learning. I happily surrendered some ideas. During an oral examination, as part of my candidacy process, when the examiner suggested that my orthodox recitation of the "Second Coming" was not the only reading of the New Testament texts, I was happy to let that go. I was twenty-one years old when I entered Seminary, the new ideas and learning were fascinated to me. I clung more tenaciously, though, to "moral" teachings of the Bible. I built a foundation of biblical knowledge that could accommodate questions even if what I was doing was acquiring knowledge as an instrument (Drago-Severson 2004, 23). I wanted to know in order to teach, to tell, to admonish. As much as I understood the Bible as a diminutive sacred cow, for me it remained sacred with moral forms of authority over all human beings.

The extracts from my journal reveal someone who asks ques-

tions. Dick Rogers' Johnny Wonder's Question Corner Comic Strip fueled my daily curiosity. That they did not have questions related to the Bible made my search for answers even more urgent. In time I came to see questions as a less assertive way to demonstrate my knowledge (Huber 2011, 86). Alfie's question, "what's it all about?" more than anything else sums up my teenage angst. I don't know that I love this question, at least, in the way that Rainer Maria Rilke suggests. I live this question to the point where my middle-aged self meets my teenage self. The journal gives us a chance to meet. In meeting, I see how I use questions to notice and explore (Huber 2011, 34; Perry 2011, 151)). Keeping a journal might have made me a better writer (Stevens and Cooper 2009,18). Since I have the chance to correct for that gap and hone my writing skills through a journal, I regret missing out on taking note of my explorations. I am curious about what people do with the Bible outside of church. My love for reading and critical analysis of literature emerged around the same time I started reading the Bible critically. High School classes in "critical appreciation and comment" as well as Elizabethan literature gave me skills to explore how meaning is made through texts. I am fascinated by the worlds that open up before me because they generate more questions. Over the years, the worlds that come together in biblical interpretation have increased as the walls of separation of sacred/profane, relevant/irrelevant, or appropriately cultural breakdown.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA Date 03/24/1990

By this time in Seminary I am coming to a fair understanding of Bible translations. "Every translation is an interpretation." I can also see the difference between "real" Bibles and children's Bibles. The more I read in Hebrew the more I understand how Bible translations create bibles to suit their purposes. The story of Satan falling from heaven is in Isaiah but the Jehovah Witness Bibles have it as almost an early chapter of Genesis. This is almost as making the Bible say what you want it to say. My friend Hugo says that the fruit in the garden was a banana. I am inclined to agree since we have to import apples. God would have planted a banana in a tropical garden right?

By not keeping a learning journal I regret the times I might not have always learned from my experiences. Experiences do not always need to be negative to teach us something. Experiences, the memorable ones, for whatever reason they are memorable, provide opportunities for learning. Some of my more memorable experiences of biblical interpretation occurred during the years of active pastoral ministry. I served as a Methodist Pastor in St. Vincent and Tobago with a brief internship experience in Barbados. Interpreting the Bible in a relevant way for the Carib-

CHAPELBOULDER, ST. VINCENT Date 11/12/1992

I preached on Gen 4 and found the idea that we cannot tell what God said to kill Abel. The idea that the world is unfair makes sense. God never reveals why accept the offering from one and not another. All the theories about farmers and herders don't hold water. I am more attracted to the idea that God does not create a fair world and we have to get used to it. Maybe these ideas were too much for these Congregations? I know some people were not happy to hear me quote the saying, "Donkey says the world is not level" as a critique. There are so many sources we could mine with the Bible from our own people. Why should all the wisdom come from the past? We Caribbean people have reflections to offer and I find that today I found one that fit.

bean and meeting the pastoral needs that come with death and dying gave me invaluable learning experiences that would otherwise go unnoticed if not for a journal. Years later, I can see links between my pastoral experiences and formation as a scholar. My inability to become a flag-waving patriot in the days after the September 11 events in New York City forged my sense of the ambiguity of the book of Jeremiah. At that time, in the early stages of the Ph.D. program at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York I lived in Harlem and pastored a United

SCARBOROUGH, TOBAGO Date 08/30/1991

Jer 29:11 bothers me. Sis. Jean always puts it at the top of her note pages. I know she uses it like a prayer. I am more interested in 29:7. This verse is so descriptive of the Caribbean reality - taken away to another land and forced to make a living there. I find it necessary to use this for Independence Day service. This helps me to talk about what it means as a nation of Africans & Indians forced by the British to march the march out of a country that the British left when it was convenient for them to leave. Jeremiah gives the advice to make the most of what we have where we are. This verse is about - "now" - r. it is about the future. How can we get to the future if we don't think about "now"? And how can we deal with "now" if we don't address the past - slavery, indentured, colonialism? Jeremiah is such a relevant book for us.



Methodist Church in Harlem. I stood in the midst of several complexities, not least of which were the complexities of speech and silence that faced Jeremiah. As war raged in Iraq and the counterinsurgency gained steam, passages from Jeremiah appeared in the lectionary each September to taunt me to break into a jeremiad. Over the years of my critical study of Jeremiah, my admiration of the fearless prophet that had turned to scorn for a prophet that seemed aligned with the Babylonian Empire only to then evolve into sympathy for such conflicted personalities.

rides for reflective thinking from my theme park, I deny myself and my students the chance to actually grow and grow through genuine play. In truth, rather than expanding the range of my knowledge, I have been merely adding more examples of ideas I had already gained. Reflection lacks the rigor of true academic learning I would have told myself if I kept a teaching journal. Yet reflective thinking feels like a disturbance that forces me to engage my curious SELF with material and ideas that would readily negate my unique existence. I have to make a move that joins my experience or at least experiences that I am aware of together with the ideas in a process that lets me try them out in the real world. Seeing these processes work together and assessing them not simply for their viability but their suitability for me or my community form the heart of reflective thinking that a learning journal facilitates. That process is as rigorous as trying to distill complex philosophical ideas. A learning journal opens the space for a curiosity. Curiosity is a fun ride. The ride becomes even more thrilling when there is room for questions that generate the merry-go-round of experience, ideas, testing out, and reflection (Stevens and Cooper 2009, 24).

MADIC BANK, JAMAICA Date 03/06/1989

Today I preached the funeral of a 35 year old that I met during my CLE at the hospital. He was thrown out of a jeep when it crashed after he and his friends were driving home from a party. He suffered internal injuries. I used Ps. 42:5 and the title, "The Hope that Does Not Despair." The psalm promises hope as an answer. I think that is what I should be doing for a family who lost someone so young. In truth I don't know how much hope helps. I am 2 years younger than him and I think my parents maybe asking this question "Where is your God?" It is a question in the Realm and the answer is hope in God. The best I could do is say you will get back up. You must get back up. "Things that men we!" Cry today and get back to living tomorrow. I take comfort that the Bible has a space for these concerns. And I find it valuable to walk with people in these times. Hope seems like a good answer.

HARLEM, NEW YORK Date 10/29/2000

I am lukewarm about TAKE BACK THE WORD. This is a textbook for the class with a lot of gay interpretations of the bible. Since I have to lead the tutorial section I have to appear open. Help students and help myself have a "gracious reading" of the material. I could follow the logic of the argument even though I do not agree. The heterosexual contract is a likely way to take down Gen 3. How else can you avoid the reality that this is a man and a woman? There is no pretending that in the earliest sense this was meant to be heterosexual. So if there is a contract it comes from <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>right</sup> of God. I know that in New York I have become comfortable with the homosexuals I know from church and school. They seem like good people but this really is Adam and Eve! I don't know how to make it say otherwise?

The course in Christian Ethics I took in Seminary stands out as the most memorable course I have ever taken. I reveled in examining issues from multiple perspectives. The non-stop demands to come up with airtight arguments were exhilarating. The push to "take a stand" and "defend it" opened up an academic wonderland I wanted to play in every day. This was critical thinking at its best and I wanted to be a devotee of this form of learning. When I saw "critical thinking" as degree outcomes in the curriculum for both of the seminaries where I have taught, I knew I had found the theme park that would spark joy. In the academic playground I prefer, playing turned into serious mind games. Reflection, introspection, or getting in touch with feelings spoiled the fun. I emphasize observations in my teaching. Helping students pay attention to the world around them, how their learning fits into that world are things I underline. By doing so, I realize that I pack more critical thinking on top of critical thinking to make learning an instrument. An instrument of more and more information. "The place where fun goes to die"? When I leave out the

Surviving the pandemic jump started my journal practice. In addition to the collective traumas of that time, I faced several accumulated personal events that compound my grief for a time might not have actually lived. Grieving for an unknown makes it hard to separate personal and professional journals. The loss all blends together. I am surprised that I like it that way because I don't like my food to touch one another on plate except when they should. This journal mushing allows me to examine myself

in several dimensions. Reflective thinking brings the self into the foreground in learning. Another one of those heading nodding moments. I look down at my shoes, aware that I don't practice what I preach. Well, not completely. Reflections on the SELF led to the development of a postcolonial optic in my research and teaching. My dissertation and academic publications speak to my biography in overt ways to those who know me well. The confluence of the pandemic, personal grief, and simply aging opened up gaps in my teaching. At what point did I teach reflective thinking even when I asked students to produce work focused on sustaining just communities? How did I help students start with the SELF as much as I wanted them to center the SELF in their writing? Where were the places I attended to examining ways of knowing even as I emphasized that a critical problem with biblical knowledge are our epistemologies?

Dr. Davidson, I am having trouble with the assignment because I still do not understand what I should be writing.

I looked at the student in my office knowing that her earnestness should have led her to be more open about her difficulties in the class. I knew that I didn't want to follow where she was leading. Instead, I asked, What do you think the passage is about?

Aaron and Miriam are being punished by God. They both did something wrong and God punished them, she answered. From her answer, I could tell that she understood at least most of what was happening in the passage but couldn't get at something that was a worthwhile observation for her. People sin in the Bible, and God punishes them, seems like a regular feature of the Bible.

Let's look at again, I pressed, knowing that she was not seeing what was clearly there.

I read it several times and I see the same thing, she protested as much as her deference for authority would allow.

Ok, well, tell me what happened to Aaron. I waited for her to read the passage. This might well have been the hundredth time she read it. She was a diligent student.

I don't think anything happened to him, she finally offered.

What happened to Miriam?

She got sick; she volunteers beginning to sense a difference.

So, both Miriam and Aaron are accused of the same fault, talking bad about Moses, but God only punishes Miriam? What does this say about God?

That God is not fair? She concluded quite hesitantly and silently as we were transacting a drug deal.

Exactly! I shouted in smug satisfaction over the success of my Socratic practice. But then the student quickly punctured my joy.

But Dr. Davidson, I cannot write that, she bluntly declared now pressing me on the defensive.

What do you mean? I asked quizzically and mildly upset.

Can I write that God is unfair? I would feel uncomfortable saying that, she outlined in a matter-of-fact way that would leave no room for negotiations.

Even if you come to that conclusion from your read-

ing? I pressed hoping that the light of her discovery would confirm her growth. She didn't respond but turned uncomfortably in the chair. At that point I realized that I needed to assure her that her fears of writing blasphemous words would not impact her as God could take the criticism. She listened thoughtfully and respectfully, though reluctantly. Her assignment didn't mention God's unfairness. She found other more theologically palatable observations to include in her work to show an adequate level of developed thinking.

I regret not keeping a journal of learning and teaching in real-time. I regret not giving this student the chance to keep a journal. Who knows whether that meeting was as memorable for her as it was for me. Was it even formative for her? I recognize that so much learning takes place outside of the classroom and in a number of instances beyond the life of the course (hooks 1994, 206). The practice of a learning journal has the potential to outline a lifetime of learning that extends beyond the formal limits of a course and with good fortune into meaningful relationships between teachers and students to the point of mutual teaching and learning (hooks 1994, 205).

HARLEM, NEW YORK Date 07/22/2002

I have to admit that Phyllis Trible makes a solid point that the man is not made until the female is created. Gender is a social construct. The Hebrew argument is convincing: IT is = earth creature without any reference to gender. Only after the woman IT is is created do we see man's appearing. This changes things for me. I could see how a case is made away from the silliness of Adam & Eve not Adam & Eve is possible. I have met people who really believe in God and have been a part of the Church for years that are gay. They impress me as serious sinners and Christians. Should they not also be a part of the Church? Should they not also receive God's grace. I know how we have had to interpret divorce and remarriage in the face of what is in the Bible. We can do the same thing here.

"Trust me, I know what I am doing" seems like a misplaced motto to adopt in teaching Biblical Studies (Skinner 2008, 100). I don't recall ever saying it. In fact, I have little patience for sayings like "Trust the journey" or "Trust the process." Without using those exact words, my teaching aims to guide students to a promised land of liberative biblical reading comes across as me asking them "trust me, learn from me and you can still continue



to hold the Bible as a book of faith or even preach from it." I am not sure how much trust I receive when I teach. I know I get respect. They respect that I know what I am talking about, that I am competent in the subject, that I am a fair teacher (Skinner 2008, 102). They respect that I teach them new things and push them to perform at a high level. I heard that respect from a group of students who sat in stunned silence on the drive back to their Seminary after a class until one person asked what everyone was thinking, "Did he just say that there might not have been a Moses?" Not only did they share this experience with me several months later, but in subsequent years they seek me out to ask questions or guidance on biblical texts.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA Date 04/27/1991

The debates we have outside of classes are so amazing. What is sin? Trying to define this based upon Gen. 2-3 led to 2 nights of conversations. Not surprisingly, Lester agrees with me "separation from God." Henry takes the traditional view of acts and inherent moral weakness. The debates or conversations showed me that there is room to move beyond the traditional reading of biblical texts. Did Adam and Eve do something wrong? Or did they stumble into a new relationship with God? Now that I express the idea that this is a story of temptation, I find it easier to see more possibilities of interpreting Genesis in creative ways.

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS Date 08/01/1994

The bible doesn't really speak against slavery. This is it possible to preach about freedom and emancipation when now the bible seem to condone slavery? It is Carnival time in Barbados. The Carnival here is tied to Emancipation and the end of the sugar crop. Crop Over they call it. So I talked about the line between slavery, the end of the plantation system and carnival. Celebrating freedom! I remember how my grand mother used to say that in the Old Testament times people would have festivals - eat and drink for days. The only Bible text I could find to preach from is John 5:1. There was a Jewish festival and Jesus was there. Jesus would have celebrated Carnival. "Scandalous." The joyful people would be uncomfortable hearing that. I like reading the bible to make sense of these things. Because we are not outside of culture. I think we can read the Christian Caribbean culture in the Bible.

debates around faith that I have had about faith and how much we can develop that based upon the Bible. The complaint of loss that occurs in a Biblical Studies class can be eased with the space to see how spirited engagement with peers but mostly the SELF provides a way to gain, to once again participate in a living faith (Blount 2002, 68).

Students don't really need to trust me to learn. I am happy with respect. And perhaps respect is a form of trust in the teaching learning relationship that's built upon learning in an instrumentalist frame. I aim for transformation that requires the type of intentionality that a learning journal provides. Students can trace their process and notice how they develop. In this way they can become even more aware of how they construct knowledge (Barbezat and Bush 2014, 129).

Learning journals ask students to pay attention to the SELF (Tombro 2016, 17). I could do more for a student if I teach them to trust the SELF on the journey (Hess 2008, 54). As a learner, I never had the type of cognitive dissonance as expressed in course evaluation comments: "Seems like this is a class where you can't mention the name of Jesus" or "He ruined Christmas for me after the class on Isaiah." My dissonance was of another variety of the same fruit. For me it was more about the thinness of historical data to support the birth narratives of the Gospel that could make Christmas more than a sentimental event. A journal would have given me the space to process the vigorous

Looking back, I can see where I lacked and where I need to make more space for students to engage the SELF in their learning. The changes to the SELF that happens with education beckon us to a new and hopefully a better place. The SELF emerges as a new authority figure in that place (Drago-Severson 2004, 21). If students find the surrender of the authority they presumed resided in the Bible to the professor in a class an untenable idea, handing that authority over to the SELF becomes even more threatening. A course evaluation is not a place for journal writing, even when it's the only opportunity in a course to vent about the de/re/formation of the SELF (Brookfield and Hess 2008, 3). On any given day, I will state the lofty goals of wanting to equip students to be independent learners, transformative agents, critical thinkers, and on and on and on. Ideals take a while to become practice. I say this because a critical inventory of my teaching practice reveals that it doesn't always rise to the discernable and rigorous standards of engaged pedagogy to which I aspire (hooks 1994, 15). Learning journals can help me and students interrupt the uncritical transfer of their authority to the teacher rather than to the SELF. Journals help to track ways of

knowing and to reflect upon how these ways are being transformed. At the heart of the journal is attention to well-being, a value that I have not always experienced as a learner nor cultivated as a teacher.

At the start of a semester, I say this to students: "I don't expect that at the end of this course that you will agree with everything that I have taught you. In fact, I don't expect that you will see things the way that I do. What I hope for is that by the end of the semester, you will use what you have learned to examine what you have previously known. And in so doing, you will be able to clearly state why you hold to those views knowing there are alternative views. You might leave the class with the same positions as you started but I want you to hold those in a more informed way." My idealism shows in one way or another! I say this to students with all sincerity. I want them to be knowers in all the ways that are available to them. Of course, I must also expand my range of the myriad ways of knowing and facilitating these ways through teaching. Since I now teach the Bible to students largely students of color who are socialized into thinking that they have no place in the creation of meaning about the texts and they are simply conduits for ancient insights, I want to emphasize the SELF. Now I need to cultivate the environment for the SELF to thrive in my classrooms. Journal writing focused on the SELF needs to be more than a place to practice or a platform towards "real" learning (Tombro 2016, 17). The learning journal when done well integrates life and the classroom (Perry 1987, 157). This integration accomplishes the type of development

that we wish to see in our students where they become self-actualized with the capacity to discern the forces that shape the world and how they will live in response to them (Stevens and Cooper 2009, 34).

Journals bring us face to face with a SELF that doesn't always feel so loveable far less knowledgeable. I marvel at my naivety even at the boldness of questions I asked in my teenage years surprise me now. My rigidity – past and present – embarrasses me. The ways I supported oppressive insights. My stumbling articulations of liberation don't sometimes restrict my writing. Mixed in there like soggy bread (yuck!) are the moments of brilliance, dexterity with discipline, original insights, and unrelenting pursuit of freedom. I can't tell what's original porcelain and what is the golden glue that holds all of this together. The journal keeps reintroducing me to the SELF that has been learning the Bible in a critical way since the age of thirteen. These learning journeys that lie beneath our skin can easily deceive me into thinking that there is one critical moment when the light turns that marks true learning. Instead the journeys are marks on the skin – scars, blemishes, wrinkles, creased foreheads, and if I am lucky no sagging eyes. Learning and coming to terms with the complexities of the Bible is a lifelong project. I see how a journal marks the distance in years but more importantly how it notes for posterity the changes that take place as an adult embraces knowledge as an author rather than only a receiver of wisdom.



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