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The Message: Breaking Technique: Learn, Live, Love, Lead.

A conscientious objector, who served as a medic during the Vietnam before studying to be a minister, spoke of the intense preparations to be ready for surgeries in the battlefield and the dismay at what he called 'breaking technique.' If someone nicked their surgical gloves, they would say, "I've broken technique." Everyone would have to step back, take off their gloves, and go through the process of washing up and preparing again, so that they might preserve hygiene and follow proper technique.

He used this experience to describe the situation of the church in the modern world. The church has broken technique and must step back and begin the procedure that will allow it to proceed with its work.

In the battlefield OR, the pressure not to admit that you had broken technique, was intense and powerful.

The pressure in the church to resist this need is intense and almost irresistible.

We see how even in the face of overwhelming breaking of technique in the sins of sexual predators in the church, how impossible it is for religious leaders at the highest level to step back for the sake of cleansing and turning back to Christ.

In order to bring together two churches, over the past few months, we have been breaking technique. I've mentioned how hard amalgamation is -- we are 'breaking technique,' stepping back from the usual way. It has often got the flavour of failure about it in the church. On the battlefield, the whole operating team was angry and frustrated. Often, they would throw instruments at the person who broke technique. We can expect frustration.

But last week I pointed to amalgamations in the secular world as positive, something to be proud of. We can be proud as long as this amalgamation is truly a breaking of technique:

- a chance to rid ourselves of what does not fit our mission;
- a chance to turn back to Jesus;
- an opportunity to safely set aside the past procedures and to try out some new techniques.

Among the many documents that the Joint Amalgamation Committee produced during their work, there is a gem of a mission statement: **Learn, Live, Love, Lead.** Easy to say, easy to remember: 'Learn, live, love, lead.' *Learn..teachings of Jesus, Live..message of Jesus, Love..people like Jesus, Lead..people to Jesus.*

This is not a linear mission; we do all of these things all the time.

- As we live the message of Jesus, we learn more about how his teachings impact our lives.
- As we love people like Jesus, they will experience our love as leading them to learn more.

But this time in our church life, does draw us to spend more time learning. We need the teachings of Jesus to guide us to become a new body of Christ. And that is a gift -- for as we open ourselves to learning, we can more confidently break technique -- do things differently than we have before.

Breaking Technique can be life changing.

In 2004, a dozen members of our church, including me and my 14 year old daughter had the opportunity to vaccinate children against polio in India. For my daughter, it was breaking the technique of being a teenager in Oakville. All the things that had seemed important to her, before became insignificant. The major decisions she has made since have been because of that trip.

But it's not easy to break technique, to step back and say, "this isn't working. Let's stop and start again."

Not long ago, my sister in law in Santa Fe fell and broke her neck. We were amazed to learn that she would have an injection of an adhesive cement into the fractures which would hold them in place while they healed, reducing the pain. Despite the passage of time, however, she has been wracked by pain. Recently we have read that this procedure has been studied and found to have little effect in reducing pain -- no more than if she had just had pain killers. In Australia, the procedure has been discontinued -- since 2010! But even if doctors are reluctant to recommend it, patients refuse to 'break technique' and insist on having it anyway.

We humans can be so reluctant to stop in our tracks and look at the world from a different perspective. Reluctant to learn.

Jesus faced that in his hometown. He broke technique by

- stepping into the pulpit at the synagogue;
- proclaiming freedom to a people who were used to the chains of oppression;
- leaving out the last line of the quote which calls for the day of the vengeance of God;
- and then assuring the people that the scripture is being fulfilled in him.

Conclusion

The image of 'breaking technique' is an apt one for the church and can be a helpful tool for our lives as well.

We think that the way we do things is the same way that the church has been doing things for generations. And there is some truth to that assumption. Christians have gathered to worship for hundreds of years, but we have been watching the church decline in influence and numbers for a long time.

Jesus didn't try to solve the problems of his time with the same assumptions that created the problems. Jesus ended his sermon, his mission statement, with 'The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to **proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.**'

The year of the Lord's favour was a time when everyone broke technique: people got back to the land of their ancestors, debts were forgiven, prisoners were freed. It was a 'do over' year.

Jesus is saying, "It is a time to step back from the table of our normal pursuits." And not just for a year.

Let's learn how to step back, to focus on what is *really* important:

- to bring good news
- to proclaim release and recovery of sight
- to let the oppressed go free.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative for us to Learn! The first task in our mission.