

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

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SHOW

the conventional desire for certainty

by Drew Downs

Philip makes a most reasonable request of Jesus. He says “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” All he’s asking for is a little proof to shore up his belief. But the disciples aren’t in a hostage negotiation with Jesus. He is assuring them that they know the way to the father and they are asking for assurance. In a word, they are hedging their bets. Do they know the way? Yes, but can they say so with absolute certainty? Jesus says yes.

Proof is the central ideal of the scientific method. A hypothesis is considered true if it has been thoroughly tested and cannot be disproven. The irony for many, is that we think it is the opposite. That we must test for the truth. It seems Philip is in bountiful company these days. Proof, they might say, will lead to belief. But that isn’t belief. It’s fact. The kind of knowing Jesus describes begins with centuries of relationship, of miracles, of being in the thick of things doing the work.

EASTER

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Let Us Not Replace Our Humanity

Since the public release of the large language models (LLM) which is what we tend to mean when speaking of AI – like ChatGPT and Claude – I have tried to hold an ambivalent attitude toward them, wanting to be both optimistic and pessimistic in appropriate measure.

There is little question that this tech can make our lives easier. They offer potential shortcuts to collating data, writing emails, and producing materials in seconds that otherwise take hours. This feels like a positive development. Except that the act of collating data, writing emails, and producing materials is actually important for our brains. This is when and how we actually learn.

Several years ago, Bill Allen described his method of note-taking to me. He taught his students to take notes in class by hand, then rewrite the notes at home, doing their best to remember what they covered in class. Then they have notes they can go back to a month later that will actually help them remember what they learned in class that day. What Bill was describing was a physical, labor-intensive process that leads to memory retention and concept learning. It follows the massive evidence that shows hand writing notes is dramatically better for learning than typing. Typing allows speed and easy correction, but the act of writing is where most of the knowledge acquisition happens! This means that we learn by doing the very tasks that many are seeking to have AI cut out of our lives.

And the evidence of the *absence* of this learning is starting to appear in studies, where students who use AI produce more than their peers, but less than their peers when AI is taken away. This means that there is a deeper ethical question about LLMs than whether to use them. It is what to make of the learning erosion on the human soul.

With love,
Drew+

EASTER

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Easter 5A

May 3, 2026

Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

from John 14:1-14

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

EASTER

Reflection

A year ago, I drove down to North Carolina for a residency. There had been terrible storms the year before, which had caused incredible destruction, wiping out roads and highways and even the whole downtown of a community I had visited years before. I recognized that my path to the retreat center might be more complicated than usual. But I also felt a kind of assurance that I could find the way there. You want to know why? Google Maps. It knew the best way to get me there and I felt confident.

Well . . . it took me on some sketchy roads in the Smokey Mountains *after* taking me into the mountains with assurance that I could get *out of them*. By the time I was stuck in the national park with no cell service, I was not at all confident that Google could get me to my destination.

I even gave Google a second chance on the way home. That was a mistake, too. By the time it tried to put me on a one-lane gravel road going up a mountain, I said "Nope!" and switched to Apple Maps.

When Jesus talks about "the way" he is talking about something that exists between literal and metaphor, that does require confidence and trust. And yet the disciples consistently miscalculate what that trust is actually about. They want assurance they aren't allowed to have. It's like gambling on a sure thing. And they want the path to be predictable. None of this is what Jesus has taught or offered them.

Jesus's teachings, though, are the point of confidence. These are how they know the way. Because he has been teaching them the path the whole time. He has taught them about faith and love because this is the path. The practices are the assurance. The doing, the walking and following the path, that's on us.

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