

Knitting 104: Knitting with the Other Hand

This is a one-session class in which participants will learn to knit while holding the yarn in the opposite hand from which they normally do. Leaders of this class should be able to teach knitting and purling with both hands. I find it helpful to have assistants who are also adept in knitting both ways, as this breaks down the student-to-teacher ratio.

The pattern is quite simple, and tension doesn't matter on a dishcloth, so this is the perfect project for trying one's "hand" at knitting the other way.

Following the knitting portion of the class, close with the Bible study.

Knit One Purl Two Dishcloth

Materials: Worsted Weight Kitchen Cotton
Knitting needles according to your liking

Gauge: Entirely up to you. I like a tight dishcloth stitch, but some people like them loose.

Pattern: Rows 1 and 2: Knit
Rows 3 and 4: K1, P2. Repeat across.

Directions: Cast on sts in a multiple of 3 (I cast on 39 sts). Rep rows 1–4 of the patt until your dishcloth is approximately square, ending with Row One. Bind off.

Bible Study for Knitting 104

I. Introduction

Okay, most people are right hand dominant. And there are horror stories out there about how lefthanded kids were forced to give up their hand of choice and learn to use their right hand instead. Knitting is really an ambidextrous activity, and so you can't really say that one hand is dominant over the other. Both hands are engaged in the activity. That's why we don't have to teach a different method for left handed -vs- right handed people.

But our society has always cast things on the left as inferior to things on the right. The Latin word for Left is *sinister*, from which we get our word "sinister." But the Latin for Right is *dextra*, from which we get our word "dexterity."

We're going to look now at a little known but fascinating Bible story that has to do with left and

righthands. *Have somebody read the text. It's helpful and fun if you have people act out the parts of Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim with the blessing and the switching of the hands.*

II. Deja Vu All over Again

The thing with the knees: This is a ritual by which Jacob “adopts” Joseph’s sons as his own. Since there’s two of these boys, and they’re now both entitled to a share of inheritance, Jacob has fixed things so that his favorite son, Joseph, will receive a double share of the family inheritance.

Now, in Hebrew inheritance traditions, the eldest son received a double share of inheritance over his other brothers. So Joseph is being bumped up on the family scale.

You’ll remember that Jacob himself had cheated his brother Esau out of his elder brother status. Esau had been on a hunting expedition and had caught nothing. He arrived home half starved, and he asked Jacob for a bowl of soup. Jacob said, “What’ll you give me for it? How about your birthright?” Esau agreed to it, and so Jacob received the double share over Esau. So now we’re seeing a repeat of the family tradition.

The adoption rite is followed by the blessing. And here again, you’ll remember in the story of Jacob that he cheated his brother Esau out of his father’s blessing for him. Jacob’s mother Rebecca dressed him up to look enough like Esau that his nearly blind father Isaac took him for Esau. So Jacob received the greater blessing.

And now we see Jacob giving the greater blessing to Ephraim, who is the younger brother! He crosses his hands, so that his right hand, the favored hand, is resting on the head of the younger son. It’s deja vu all over again.

III. God’s Vision

When Joseph sized up what his father was doing by crossing his hands, he was troubled. He stepped in and uncrossed his father’s hands. **Question:** Why was Joseph upset? What was his agenda?

Think about how we categorize life into our greater and lesser piles.

Question: If you were to sort out your attributes, if you were to put them in a Left Pile and a Right Pile, how would you categorize the things you’d select for your Right Pile? For your Left Pile? (We’d put the things we’re best at, where we excel into the Right Pile, and into the Left Pile we’d put the things that we’re clumsy at, that cause us embarrassment or even shame)

So we do this at a personal level. Let’s step it up a notch. **Question:** If we were to categorize people into left and right piles, how would we do that? (Now we’re categorizing people as superior

and inferior beings! Some people are “more equal than others.”)

Here’s a story: in his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that during his student days he read the Gospels seriously. He considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus he could find the solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India.

So one Sunday he decided to attend a service at a nearby church and to talk to the minister about becoming a Christian. But when he entered the sanctuary, the usher refused to give him a seat. “Why don’t you go worship with your own people,” he was told.

Gandhi left the church and never returned. “If Christians have caste differences also, I might as well remain a Hindu.”

This Bible story of the crossed hands tells us that God sees things differently than we do. God sees value in what we regard as the lesser things. What if we were to see with God’s vision?

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing the things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

Think about the pile of your things that you have relegated to your left hand. **Question:** What might happen if you were to take another look at these things? What might happen to these qualities of yourself if you envisioned that God was giving them the blessing of the right hand?

So the next time you find yourself dismissing something as less important, take another look!

Genesis 48:8-22

When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?”⁹ Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” And he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.”¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, and he could not see well. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them.¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, “I did not expect to see your face; and here God has let me see your children also.”¹² Then Joseph removed them from his father’s knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.¹³ Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel’s left, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel’s right, and brought them near him.¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands,

for Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ He blessed Joseph, and said,
“The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

¹⁶ the angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless the boys;
and in them let my name be perpetuated, and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac;
and let them grow into a multitude on the earth.”

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father! Since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.” ¹⁹ But his father refused, and said, “I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.” ²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying,

“By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying,
‘God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh.’ ”

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. ²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your ancestors. ²² I now give to you one portion more than to your brothers, the portion that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.”