**More Like the Master**

In His Dealing With Problems

Lesson 20

*“If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause”* (John 15:24-25)

**Dealing With Problems**

As long as the Devil and sin are in the world, there are going to be problems. Jesus had to face problems during his ministry and we can learn from him how to deal with similar problems today. Jesus faced disappointments from his own disciples. Some of the things his disciples said and did indicated that they really did not understand the nature of the kingdom. Jesus also faced criticisms from his enemies. Some of his enemies did not like him and wanted him gone. Jesus had his problems.

One reason Jesus faced so many problems was because he came to preach truth to a world that did not want to hear truth. Jesus said, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil”* (John 7:7). Later, Jesus’ own disciples would be hated as well because they were not living like the world. Jesus said, *“I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”* (John 17:14). When a person stands for truth and refuses to live like the world, he is going to face problems. In this lesson we will learn how we can be “More Like the “Master” in dealing with the problems that come up from day to day both in and out of the church.

**Jesus and His Dealing With Problems**

Jesus dealt with problems without prejudice. Jesus often dealt with problems among his own disciples just like he would with others. He was not prejudiced in favor of his own disciples when they did wrong. He did not overlook their problems just because they were his disciples. For example, Jesus rebuked Peter for standing in his way (Matthew 16:22-23). He also rebuked James and John for wanting to destroy the Samaritans (Luke 9:53-56). Jesus upbraided (rebuked) his own disciples for their unbelief after they had been given eyewitnesses testimony of his resurrection (Mark 16:14).

Jesus dealt with problems through teaching. Jesus had to deal with problems among his disciples because of their misunderstandings and misconceptions. When the disciples asked Jesus, *“Who then is the greatest in the kingdom?”,* he taught them to have humble service like a child (Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48) and to be forgiving (Matthew 18:15-35). Jesus also taught them on this occasion to be willing to unite with other authorized workers (Mark 9:38-41; Luke 9:49-50) and not to cause anyone (including self) to stumble (Matthew 18:6-9; Mark 9:42-50). When the mother of James and John came and asked Jesus for a position for her sons, Jesus once again taught a lesson on humble service (Matthew 20:20-28). Later, when his disciples were once again contending among themselves about who was the greatest, he patiently taught them again about humble service (Luke 22:24-30).

Jesus dealt with problems forthrightly. Jesus often dealt with problems head-on in a forthright and plainspoken way. He knew there were times when it was necessary to speak plainly to the problem. For example, Jesus corrected the misbehavior among the Jews like their hypocritical practices and judgment toward him (John 7:21-24). He said to those Jews who were living in sin and would not believe, *“You … will die in your sin: wither I go, you cannot come”* (John 8:21; see also 7:34). He followed up this statement with: *“Except you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins”* (John 8:24). In Matthew 23, Jesus repeatedly accused the scribes and Pharisees of being hypocrites. Jesus was forthright with Judas and said *“One of you shall betray me … What thou doest, do quickly”* (John 13:21-30).

Jesus dealt with problems using discernment. Jesus often saw problems and took the initiative and action to resolve them. He was perceptive and discerning. He did not wait until a problem got out of hand and to the point where it could not be resolved. When Jesus saw his disciples reasoning about who was the greatest, he acted immediately by taking a little child and teaching them a lesson on humility and service (Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48). When Jesus perceived that the multitudes were coming to take him by force and make him a king, he withdrew himself from them (John 6:15).

Jesus dealt with problems undeterred. Jesus had to face the problem of unjust criticism on many occasions during his ministry. At times, either Jesus or his disciples would be criticized. He was criticized for healing and forgiving sins (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:18-26)). He was criticized for eating with sinners (Matthew 9:11). He was criticized for plucking grain (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28) and for working miracles on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 1:21-27; 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-5; 13:10-17; 14;1-6; John 5:1-47; 9:1-39). He was criticized for not following tradition (Matthew 15:1-20). When Jesus was criticized on these occasions, he answered his critics and moved on. He often faced his criticism with scripture and with logical argumentation and he was always undeterred by it. He did not allow unjust criticism to cause him to stop teaching and ministering to others. Jesus’ enemies often *“watched him”* in order to find a problem (Mark 3:2; Luke 6:7; 14:1; 20:20), but Jesus was undeterred by the critical gaze. He *“went about doing good”* (Acts 10:38) even in the face of unjust criticism. He did good works even when he knew people would criticize him. He did not worry about what people would think of him or do to him. Jesus’ critics were harsh at times (Matthew 12:24; Mark 2:7), but Jesus kept doing good.

Jesus dealt with problems boldly. Jesus had to face some problems with boldness and a resounding “No”. When Jesus was approached by the unbelieving Jews who wanted to test him for a sign (miracle), he said, *“there shall no sign be given …”* (Matthew 16:4). Jesus faced some problems with a simple “No”. Jesus did not always grant requests made of him. When unreasonable demands were made of him, he said, “No”. When Peter stood in his way, he said, *“Get behind me…”* (Matthew 16:23). He did this with the unbelieving Jews and with the mother of James and John who asked for a high position for her sons (Matthew 20:20-23). Jesus not only said “No” to some people, but also “Woe” to them as well. He said “Woe” to those Jews who had a problem with unbelief (Matthew 11:20-24) and those Jews who had a problem with hypocrisy (Matthew 23:1-36; Luke 11:37-54).

Jesus dealt with problems by issuing challenges. Jesus had to face the problem of his followers leaving him because they did not want the spiritual truth he was offering them (John 6:66). Jesus used this problem and occasion to challenge his own disciples. He asked the twelve, *“Would you also go away?”* (John 6:67). Jesus would often use a problem with one person or group as an occasion to teach important lessons to others (see also Matthew 16:23-24; Mark 3:4-5; 3:33-34; 10:22-23; Luke 6:9-10).

Jesus dealt with problems apologetically. Jesus had to face the problem of test questions from Jews who had no interest in believing him. For example, during his last week before the cross, Jesus was tested repeatedly with questions from unbelieving Jews. Jesus defended himself, answered their questions, put their own arguments back on them, and put themselves to the test (Matthew 21:23 – 22:46). Jesus never failed to defend the truth when it needed defending. There were times when Jesus defended himself by pointing out the inconsistent behavior of his accusers (Matthew 12:9-14) and the illogical arguments of his accusers (Mathew 12:22-29). There were times when Jesus defended himself and his disciples from false accusations (Matthew 15:1-9).

Jesus dealt with problems prayerfully. Jesus had to face the problem of Peter’s denial, but Jesus prayed for Peter that he would be restored after his fall (Luke 22:31-34). Jesus did not count Peter as a total failure on this occasion, but instead encouraged him to remain faithful. Later, he prayed on the cross for those who were scoffing at him and mocking him (Luke 23:34). Jesus did not allow problems to keep him from having a prayerful and forgiving spirit.

Jesus dealt with problems kindly. Jesus had to face the problem of Judas’ betrayal of him. He spoke kindly to Judas even though he knew Judas was going to betray him. When Judas came to betray Jesus in the garden and kiss him, Jesus said, *“Friend, do that for which thou art come?”* (Matthew 26:50). (Imagine how the word “friend” would have affected Judas as he was betraying the best friend he had ever known.) Jesus kept his composure. He did not use a problem as an excuse to get angry, violent, or verbally abusive. He did not allow problems to cause him to hold grudges or brood over injuries.

Jesus dealt with problems in a non-combative way. Jesus had to face the problem of rejection, false accusations, and even death threats. He faced these problems without threatening anyone. He was not out looking for a fight; neither did he try to force himself on people. He did not stay where he was not wanted. For example, when the Jews wanted to throw Jesus over a hill, he passed from their midst (Luke 4:29-30). When the citizens of Gadara begged him to leave, he willingly left (Mark 5:17-18). When he was rejected by the people of his own country, he did not do many miracles there (Matthew 13:54-58). When the multitudes wanted to make him a king by force, he withdrew himself (John 6:15). When he raised Lazarus and the Jews plotted to kill him, he *“walked no more openly among the Jews but departed from there into the country”* (John 11:53-54). When the mob came to arrest Jesus in the garden, he went peaceably with them and told Peter to put up his sword (Matthew 26:51-55). When Jesus was on trial before Pilate and Herod he was falsely accused, but he did not retaliate (Matthew 27:1-26). Jesus defended himself when necessary, but he never threatened his accusers. He did not revile when he was reviled. He did not threaten or fight back (1 Peter 2:22-23).

**The Christian and Problems**

Christians will have to deal with problems today in and out of the Lord’s church. They will have to deal with problems close to them with their family and friends. They will have to deal with problems with outsiders and strangers. How do Christians deal with such problems? Christians have an example in Jesus. Peter writes: *“For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps”* (1 Peter 2:21).

We will have problems within the local church. Christians will have to face problems with their fellow-brethren within the local church from time to time. We might have to face the problem of neglect, like in the Jerusalem church (Acts 16:1-6). This problem can be faced with prayer and volunteer service. We might have to face the problem of binding one’s opinion (scruple), like in the church at Rome (Romans 14:1 – 15:7). This problem can be faced by not putting the other brother down and by getting along despite one’s differences (see how Paul and Barnabas handled this problem in Acts 15:36-41). Jesus taught *“be at peace one with another”* (Mark 9:50) and Paul taught to *“follow after things which make for peace”* (Romans 14:19).

We might have to face problems over divisions, like the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 11:17-19). This problem can be faced by unifying around Christ and not man (1 Corinthians 1-4). We might have to face the problem of laziness, like in the church at Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). We might have to face the problem of apostasy, like that found among the Hebrew Christians (Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12; etc.). We might have to face problems over prejudice, an inactive faith, the tongue, or fighting, like among the twelve tribes of the Dispersion (James 2:1, 14; 3:5; 4:1). We might have to face problems involving persecution (1 Peter 1:6; 3:14; 4:16). We might have to face the problem of self-assertive preeminence, like in the case of Diotrophes (3 John 9-10). We might have to face the problem of ungodly men (Jude 4, 15). We might have to face the problem of false teachers. This problem was found in Rome (Romans 16:17-18), in Galatia (Galatians 1:6-9), in Colossae (Colossians 2:8-23), in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:18), in Crete (Titus 1:10-13), in the Dispersion (2 Peter 2:1-22), and in Asia Minor (Revelation 2:12-29). This problem is faced with teaching truth and not having fellowship with false teachers (2 John 9-11).

We will have problems outside the local church. Christians will have to face problems from time to time with unbelieving people in the world who are not living right. Paul writes: *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; for all have not faith”* (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Some people are just unreasonable and hard to get along with because they are unbelievers. What is a Christian to do? When Christians have to face these kinds of people, they need to follow Jesus’ example. We can pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44). We should never return evil for evil and try as much as possible to be at peace with all men (Romans 12:17-18).

**More Like the Master in Dealing With Problems**

If Jesus had to face problems, his followers will have to face problems too (John 15:18-21). Like Jesus, let us face our problems without prejudice treating everyone fairly and justly. Like Jesus, let us appeal to the truth of God’s word to clear up problems. Like Jesus, let us be forthright, discerning, undeterred, and bold in our dealings with problems. Like Jesus, let us keep on doing good no matter how much we are criticized (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13). Like Jesus, let us face our problems with prayer, kindness, and a non-combative spirit. Let us all be “More Like the Master” in dealing with problems.

**Questions**

1. Why do problems often come up in the life of a Christian?

2. What were some things that Jesus did to deal with his problems in the right way?

3. What were some things that Jesus refused to do when dealing with his problems?

4. What are some problems that can come up among brethren in a local church and how should brethren deal with these problems?

5. What are some problems that can come up between Christians and unbelievers and how should Christians deal with these problems?

6. What are some things that we can do to be “More Like the Master” in dealing with problems?