**More Like the Master**

In His Teaching: The Man

Lesson 13

*“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God…”*

*(John 3:2)*

**Teaching God’s Word**

One of the greatest duties and privileges in life is to teach the wonderful message of God’s word to someone else. However, one should continuously work on improving one’s skills in teaching. A good teacher of God’s word must strive to be qualified, experienced, skilled, competent, and trained in the art of teaching. Otherwise, the one trying to teach may do more harm than good (1 Timothy 1:7).

Jesus, indeed, was *“a teacher come from God”* (John 3:2). He was God in the flesh (John 1:14) and he was the Son of God (John 1:49). As such, Jesus was qualified, experienced, skilled, competent, and trained in the art of teaching. He went from sitting with the teachers at age 12 (Luke 2:46) to being a teacher himself at age 30 (Luke 3:23). In this lesson, we will examine Jesus, the man behind the teaching. We will examine the qualifications of Jesus that made him such a skilled and successful teacher.

**Jesus: The Man Behind the Teaching**

Jesus was a skilled teacher.

***He was sacrificial.*** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by a desire to serve others through teaching. He longed to help others to learn. He wished that others would be informed of truth. He saw his audience as *“sheep without a shepherd”* (Mark 6:34) and he sacrificed to teach them and guide them (Matthew 20:28). Teaching was his aim during his ministry. For example, Jesus looked upon the rich young ruler with love and taught him (Mark 10:21). He was never too tired or busy to teach (John 4).

***He was knowledgeable.*** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by a thorough knowledge of God’s word, his subject, and his audience. He taught from the scriptures at the beginning of his ministry in a synagogue (Luke 4:16-21) to the end of his ministry on a road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27,32). He also took his disciples and *“opened their mind that they might understand the scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). There are many times when Jesus demonstrated a complete knowledge of God’s word in his teaching (Matthew 21:42; 22:29; John 7:38; 10:35). Jesus was also knowledgeable of his audience and their needs and he taught them what they needed most at the moment when they needed it most (Matthew 9:4; Mark 12:15; John 1:47; 2:25; 4:17-18; 6:61-64).

***He was simple*.** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by simplicity. His instruction was free from complex and obscure thoughts. When Jesus was teaching in the temple on one occasion, we are told that *“the common people heard him gladly”* (Mark 12:37). These common people were attracted to Jesus, in part because of his simple message that they could understand (John 12:9). Jesus taught on the level of his audience.

***He was clear*.** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by clarity. Jesus wanted his message to be both simple and clear. He did not want his message to be hidden or abstruse. He always wanted his audience to understand the point of the lesson so that they could change their lives accordingly. When Jesus spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth, the Jews *“were filled with wrath … as they heard these things”* (Luke 4:28). They got the point and wanted to kill him (Luke 4:29). When Jesus spoke the parable of the wicked husbandman, the chief priests and the Pharisees *“perceived they he spake of them”* (Matthew 21:45) and they wanted to take him by force (Matthew 21:46).

***He was profound*.** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by deep and weighty truths that came from God. He did not simply spout out meaningless drivel or pass along the same worn out traditions of men. He declared the great words of God. He came to declare God (John 1:18). He came to elevate the righteousness of men over the human traditions that they were used to hearing and the human hypocrisy that they were used to seeing (see Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7). Jesus offered a solution to man’s greatest problems. He taught the highest moral and spiritual values. Even Jesus’ enemies were moved to confess: *“Teacher, we know that thou art true…”* (Matthew 22:16).

***He was relevant*.** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by relevance. He always taught what was pertinent and applicable to his audience. He did not waste his time on subjects that were not needed at the moment. He never chased tangents. He was never ill-prepared, nor did he ever try to “fill time” by rambling on about nothing. When Jesus saw what his audience needed, he taught exactly the subject to fit the need (Mark 6:34). He saw that Nicodemus needed a lesson on being born again (John 3) and the woman at the well needed a lesson on living water (John 4). He saw that his followers needed lessons on true discipleship, not the human tradition that they were used to hearing (Matthew 5-7). He saw that the Pharisees needed to be exposed for their hypocrisy (Matthew 23). Jesus was relevant. He met the needs of mankind when and where they needed to be met.

***He was practical.*** Jesus teaching was characterized by practical application. He did not offer his audience abstract, philosophical, and hypothetical ideas or theories. He taught concrete lessons to his audience so that they could go out and practice what he preached. Jesus wanted his audience to hear and do his words: *“but whosoever shall do and teach them…”* (Matthew 5:19), and “*Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them…”* (Matthew 7:24). When Jesus finished the parable of the Good Samaritan, he said, *“Go and do likewise”* (Luke 10:37). Jesus explained, illustrated, and applied his lessons. When he sent his apostles into all the world to make disciples, he told the apostles to baptize them and to teach them to observe all that was commanded (Matthew 28:19-20).

***He was picturesque.*** Jesus’ teaching is characterized by striking lessons. He often used figures, illustrations, similes, metaphors, parables, object lessons, OT examples, etc. He was never dry or boring. Jesus sat by the seaside and *“taught them many things in parables”* (Mark 4:1-2).

***He was natural.*** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by informal and natural means. He did not use the highly professional and complicated teaching methods of the Jewish rabbinical schools. He did not use the sophisticated system of allegorical interpretations of his day which set forth a fantastic array of multiple meanings from Scripture. He did not teach with a highbrow, professor-type oratory. He did not use fancy words. Jesus would simply stand or sit and teach with a strikingly simple approach. He *“opened his mouth and taught them”* (Matthew 5:1-2).

***He was brief*.** Jesus’ teaching is characterized by brevity. He did not teach long and boring lessons. His teaching was powerful and compact. There were times when Jesus would use a longer, discourse method of teaching (see Matthew 5-7 or 24-25), but often he was short and to the point. He was brief about humility: *“For everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”* (Luke 14:11). He was brief about being first and last: *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last first” (Mark 10:31).* He was brief about greatness: *“But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all”* (Mark 10:43-44); etc.

***He was authoritative.*** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by a strong and fearless proclamation of truth. He was the divine Son of God, and as such, he taught truth with authority. He did not appeal to the words or traditions of men. He often would often not even attempt to prove what he said, but would simply say it as truth and move on. Jesus taught with authoritative confidence. He did not speak hesitantly, apologetically, or tentatively. He knew what he wanted to say and he said it. Jesus’ teaching with authority was different and the people in his day recognized it. Matthew records: *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes”* (7:28-29; see also Mark 1:27 and Luke 4:32,36).

***He was exemplary.*** Jesus’ teaching was characterized by principles from his own life. He preached to others what he first practiced himself. He embodied his own teaching. He was truth (John 14). For example, he taught forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4) and he practiced it (Luke 23:34). He taught service (Matthew 20:26-28) and he practiced it (John 13:13-15). Jesus’ life always matched up with Jesus’ lessons.

Jesus was a successful teacher.

***He astonished his audience.*** Jesus was able to draw large crowds with his teaching (Mark 2:13; Luke 19:47; 20:1; 21:37-28) and his teaching had a profound impact on them. We are told several times in the gospels that the people were “astonished” at Jesus’ teaching. The multitudes were *“astonished at his teaching”* (Matthew 7:28; 13:54; 22:33; Mark 1:22) and his own disciples were *“astonished at his teaching”* (Matthew 19:25). People took notice when Jesus taught them. Luke records: *“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?”* (Luke 4:22). After Jesus had a controversy with the Pharisees and Herodians, Matthew records: *“And when they heard it, they marveled, and left him, and went away”* (Matthew 22:22).

***He changed his audience.*** Jesus was also successful in his teaching because of the wisdom with which he taught. Mark records: *“And when the sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands?”* (Mark 6:2). Jesus was successful because his wisdom changed people. Consider the Jews’ accusation against Jesus while he was on trial: *“He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judaea, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place”* (Luke 23:5). Jesus used his teaching to stir up the people to change their lives for the better. He informed the ignorant. He exalted human nature (consider how many sinners, publicans, women, Gentiles, and Samaritans he helped). He transformed lives. He reformed the religious status-quo of the day (consider the many Jewish traditions and hypocrisies that he addressed). He influenced future generations (consider the thousands of people who have read his words down through time). He saved souls from sin (consider the many souls saved from his Sermon on the Mount to his words to the thief on the cross).

**The Christian and Teaching Qualifications**

We must be skilled in our teaching. The apostle Paul wrote the following to Timothy: *“And the things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2). Note two important words in this verse: “faithful” and “able”. The word “faithful” in this verse means trustworthy and the word “able” means capable. As Christian teachers, we need to be persons who can be trusted to teach properly and we need to have the capacity and capability to accurately teach God’s word to others. In short, we need to be skilled teachers. Skill comes with practice. The more we volunteer to teach, the more skill we will acquire in teaching (Hebrews 5:11-14). We can practice teaching using the same teaching characteristics of Jesus.

We must be successful in our teaching. The apostle Paul also wrote this to Timothy: *“Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching ... Take heed to yourself, and to your teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this you will save both yourself and them that hear you”* (1 Timothy 4:13,16). We teach with one main goal in mind: to save ourselves and those who hear us. Let us do what can to teach God’s word, knowing that all scripture is *“profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3:16). We teach God’s word to save and to make one righteous!

**More Like the Master in His Teaching Qualifications**

Jesus had a profound effect on all who heard him. He was known as “Teacher” (Matthew 8:19; 12:38; 19:16; 26:18; Mark 4:38). Martha said, *“the Teacher is here”* (John 11:25). Indeed, Jesus was the master teacher. He is *“the Lord and the Teacher”* (John 13:14). When Jesus finished his Sermon on the Mount, we are told that *“the multitudes were astonished at his teaching”* (Matthew 7:28-29). Even the officers of the Jews confessed on one occasion the following about Jesus: *“Never man so spake”* (John 7:46). Here is a man who was born in a small town, the son of a carpenter. He never wrote a book, never held an office, never had a home or family, never went to college, and never travelled really far. Yet, he was the greatest teacher the world had ever known. Remember, Jesus said, *“every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher”* (Luke 6:40). Let us be “More Like the Master” in our teaching!

**Questions**

1. What were some characteristics of Jesus’ teaching that showed he was a skilled teacher?

2. How do the following help a teacher to be effective: Bible knowledge, simplicity, clarity, and relevance?

3. How do the following help a teacher to be effective: practicality, brevity, and Bible authority?

4. What were some results of Jesus’ teaching that showed he was a successful teacher?

5. What can teachers learn from 1 Timothy 4;13,16 and 2 Timothy 2:2?

6. What characteristics of Jesus can a Christian imitate which will make him more skilled and “able” (capable) to teach others (see the list on pages 55 – 57)?

7. What result, success, or main goal does a Christian hope to achieve in teaching others?