

The Gospel of the Kingdom: Jesus—The Master Teacher

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

Who was the greatest teacher of all time? We all know the correct answer to that question, don't we? No matter what our true initial thought is, since we are "in church," we know the correct answer must be "Jesus." While some may not agree, I do not believe that is just the "in church" answer. Jesus is the greatest teacher to have ever lived. The Sermon on the Mount demonstrates exactly why He is the Master Teacher. Some may think He was a great teacher because this awesome Sermon, as recorded, doesn't last more than 15 minutes. However, I believe we can notice some more substantive points establishing Jesus as the Master Teacher. We don't examine this merely to know more about Jesus. Rather, we are all progressing to be teachers (**Hebrews 5:12**). We must, therefore, pay attention to our greatest example. If we want to teach well, we will teach like Jesus.

Discussion:

- I. He demonstrated a mastery of various teaching techniques.
 - A. This is the most basic and pragmatic level of Jesus' mastery of teaching. He did not rely on the same teaching formula repeatedly. Some teachers, even if they are talking about different subjects, have one unvaried teaching method. Jesus, however, used multiple means to teach.
 - B. Consider the following examples.
 1. Perhaps Jesus is best known for His use of parables, stories of earthly things having heavenly significance. He ended this Sermon with one, telling the parable of the two builders (**Matthew 7:24-25**). Stories draw people in to the teaching. They develop principles in easily understood arenas and cast light on the more complex spiritual issues at hand.
 2. Jesus employed aphorisms, terse sayings of truth. The beatitudes are examples (**Matthew 5:3-10**). Aphorisms convey profound truth in easily remembered statements. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The repeated formula in these statements drives the points into our memory even further.
 3. Jesus provided illustrations. In **Matthew 6:1**, Jesus conveyed the broad principle that we must not perform our righteousness before men to be seen by them. He did not stop with stating the principle. He provided three illustrations in **Matthew 6:2-4, 5-6, 16-18**—the giving of alms, praying and fasting. We understand the main point through the illustrations.
 4. Jesus refuted error. The biggest section of the Sermon is **Matthew 6:21-48**. In it, Jesus stated the error. Then He explained the truth. We are often afraid to state the errors of others, correcting them. Yet, that is exactly what Jesus did.
 5. Jesus provided models. It is one thing to discuss principles. It is entirely different to say, "Do it like this." In **Matthew 6:9-13**, Jesus said, "Pray, then, in this way..." Then He provided a verbal model for prayer.
 6. Jesus made full use of figures of speech. There is the paradox in **Matthew 5:4**, which essentially teaches, "Happy are the sad." There are metaphors such as **Matthew 5:13-16**, which teaches we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. He used hyperbole when He taught us to pluck out our eyes and cut off our hands in **Matthew 5:29-30**. I am sure we could discover numerous others. Figures grab attention and provoke thought.
 7. He used comparison and contrast. In **Matthew 7:13-14**, He spoke of the two ways before us—the narrow and the broad. Granted, in this particular illustration, Jesus used a metaphor, almost telling another parable. He wasn't talking about literal paths. However, hearing this contrast, we clearly know what our choices are.
 8. Jesus used warnings. In **Matthew 6:1**, He said, "Beware..." Then He stated consequences, "...otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." In **Matthew 5:19**, He warned any who might deduct from His teaching. In **Matthew 5:20**, He warned that those whose righteousness did not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees would not enter the kingdom. Many act today as if warning is out of place. We are told not to do that because we are not the judge. However, if we are going to teach as Jesus did, we will warn those who fall short of what Jesus taught.

9. Jesus taught the hard sayings. He did not think, “No one wants to hear this. I won’t say it.” He did not say, “If I say this, people will reject me.” Consider the hard statements found in **Matthew 5:39-42**. Turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, give your coat to the one who sues you for your shirt, give to him who asks. Also the extremely hard statement found in **Matthew 5:44**, “But I say to you, love your enemies.”
 10. He provided pragmatic, down-to-earth, rules of thumb. **Matthew 5:12** is really a summary statement of the entire Sermon. We may get into lofty discussions to determine the exact meaning of every statement in the Sermon, but Jesus left us with a great practical guide. If we want to properly turn the other cheek, love our enemies and judge properly, we must treat others the way we want to be treated. No doubt, this doesn’t teach the ins and outs of Jesus’ doctrine or all the detailed aspects of Christian character. However, it is something that provides pragmatic take away. Whenever we teach, we need to get down to where the rubber meets the road. We must always get to where the principle impacts the practice.
- C. Jesus mastered numerous techniques and methods of getting His point across. If we want to teach effectively, we should learn from His approach. However, I believe these technical aspects are actually the least of what made Jesus a great teacher.
- II. He provoked thought, study and further questions.
- A. We often believe the greatest teachers are those who make complex issues simple. No doubt there is some truth to that. Yet, Jesus did not always take that approach. We want teachers to devour the hard subjects for us and then spit out bite sized answers to our every possible question. Jesus simply did not do that. The Sermon on the Mount, though it will lead us to nearly every teaching about the Christian’s character, does not answer all our questions. In fact, it often raises more questions. It forces us to dig in the entirety of the Word to find out just exactly what is being taught.
 - B. Consider the Beatitudes in **Matthew 5:3-12**. They cause immediate questions. Is everyone supposed to be like this? Is this only talking about blessings on those who just happen to have these qualities? Are these spiritual qualities or material? When are we poor in spirit enough? Think about the number of questions caused by **Matthew 5:39-42**. How far do we take those principles? Do they teach that we are not allowed any manner of self defense? Are we allowed to protect our families from physical harm? What about military service?
 - C. No doubt, there is a time for clear concise, easily understood answers. There is a time to provide milk for the babes in Christ (**Hebrews 5:11-14**). However, when teachers give pat answers to all our questions, we don’t learn. To learn, we must be challenged to think. This is often the reason our children grow up and leave the faith. We rarely make them think through the processes that led us where we are. We simply told them the answers. Jesus was unwilling to provide pat answers. He chose to challenge His disciples with thought provoking, study inducing, question inspiring teaching. This means something for us learners. We cannot come to the Sermon expecting pat answers to our every question. Rather, we have to be prepared to think, study and question further. Learning from Jesus takes work.
- III. He taught with authority.
- A. According to **Matthew 7:28-29**, the crowds were amazed because He taught as one having authority. These follow up verses to the Sermon amaze me. If Matthew had stopped by saying, “The crowds were amazed at His teaching...” I would not be surprised. Jesus said some pretty astounding things. But they were not nearly so amazed by what Jesus said as by how He said it. They were used to hedging, posturing and hiding behind the supposed scholarship of others. Jesus offered none of that. He simply spoke what He knew to be truth. In fact, Jesus’ repeated formula of “You have heard that the ancients were told...but I say to you...” was a highlight of this issue. The scribes would garner together the words of “ancient worthies” and repeat the traditions handed down by men. Jesus did not. He was His own authority. He needed no other. Fourteen times Jesus said, “I say to you.” His words are not true because Moses said them. They are not true because the prophets said them. They are not true because the majority of ancient scholars agreed with Him. They are true because He, the king of the Jews, God in the flesh, said them.

- B. We are often told we shouldn't teach like this. We should hedge and hem and haw and explain this is merely our opinion. We are to qualify everything with, "I could be wrong, but I believe..." We are to let everyone know they are allowed to believe whatever they want, but would they possibly consider our thoughts. We should give thought to the majority of scholars and what they have determined before we speak. But that is not how Jesus taught. He taught with authority and the people were astounded. Having said that. I do believe we need to keep in mind we are not Jesus. We cannot clearly teach based upon our own authority. We have none. All authority was given to Jesus (**Matthew 28:18**). However, when we teach, we ought to teach based on the authority of Jesus as provided through the Word. Peter said, "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God" (**1 Peter 4:11**). If we are standing out on the shaky ground of our own speculation, we should not speak with the sound of authority. However, when we are teaching the Word of God, we should not hedge, we should speak as though speaking the utterances of God. We should speak with conviction. We should speak in the name of Jesus, speaking with His authority supporting us.
- C. Of course, Jesus did not teach this way in order to amaze people. We must not either. But we must teach the oracles of God with conviction that others may glorify God (**Matthew 5:16**).

IV. He lived what He taught.

- A. Has anyone ever told you, "Do as I say, not as I do"? I don't know who the first person was to mouth those stupid words. Surely we can all see their hypocrisy. Perhaps when explaining we are imperfect, but what we taught was the truth, there is a place for this statement. But in general, this formula encourages people to avoid listening to us. After all, if we don't think what we are saying is important enough to do, why should anyone else? We need to recognize our actions drown out our words.
- B. Though Jesus told the disciples to do what the Pharisees taught but not what they did in **Matthew 23:3**, He refused to live with that kind of pattern. His life exemplified His teaching. If we want to see how to live this Sermon, we can look to Jesus' life.
- C. Poor in spirit, though His was not due to sin as ours is; mourning, though over our sins and not His own; gentleness; hungry for righteousness; merciful; pure in heart; peacemaking; persecuted—who exemplifies these Beatitudes more than Jesus? He was THE light of the world. He abided by God's commands. His righteousness surpassed the scribes and Pharisees. What about that most difficult section in **Matthew 5:39-42**? He gave His cheek to the smiter. He allowed them to take all His garments. He carried His cross for all of us as far as He physically was able. He has not refused to give His grace to those who ask Him. In **Matthew 5:44**, He said to love and pray for those who persecute us. Can we get the picture of Jesus on the cross saying, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing," out of our minds?
- D. Jesus was willing to do all He asked. He lived what He taught. I understand we have all already fallen short of the teaching. However, we must not ever allow "I'm only human" to provide us license to live how we want. We must practice what we preach if we wish to be effective.

V. He taught only what the Father wanted.

- A. This is the one point that makes Jesus the greatest teacher of all time. In **Matthew 7:21**, Jesus explained only those who do the will of the Father in heaven will enter the kingdom. That is what He had been teaching, the will of God. Nothing more and nothing less.
- B. In **John 7:16**, Jesus said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me." In **John 14:10**, He said, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." Jesus, God in the flesh, did not go off on His own tangents. He did not proclaim His own ideas. He repeated what the Father wanted.
- C. When we teach, we must do no less. The opportunity to teach is not the opportunity to display our own concepts, decisions or ideas. It is the time to delve into God's word and present it. We must teach what God wants taught—nothing else.

Conclusion:

Jesus is no doubt the Master Teacher. He is the greatest teacher to have ever lived. If we will be effective at teaching, we must follow in His footsteps, teaching as He taught.