

RABBI JESUS – THE MASTER TEACHER

Introduction

As we begin this study of our Lord as the Teacher, we approach this from the standpoint of who we are as James wrote, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. For we all make many mistakes..." 3:1-2 Our humility is different than our Lord's. We are fallible and need to improve in how we communicate the truth of God's Word. What better way to improve than to see how the Master did it.

General Reaction

He had no form or comeliness that we should desire Him. The present movie stars feed on adulation. Though our Lord far surpassed them in talent and ability, He was not a captive of His audience. He sought to captivate His audience to lead them into a blessed life on this earth that translates to an eternal life of bliss and glory.

He had nowhere to lay His head. Without this world's material wealth He sought to have us lay up treasures in heaven where neither moth or rust consume and where thieves cannot break in and steal. The rich of this earth very often like to attract their followers who hanker after their wealth. Our Lord taught that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. Those who heard Jesus say this asked, "Then who can be saved?" The Master's answer was and is "What is impossible with men is possible with God." Lk. 18:25-26 The Great Rabbi redirects men in the right direction.

Despite what moderns would say are 'shortcomings' of no good looks to attract and no wealth to put forward His teachings in institutions, sit and listen to the reactions to Him. Walk along with the crowds and see and hear the reactions to Jesus. As we proceed through the four Gospel narratives Jesus' words and works are one in Him and garner the reaction.

- At the Sea of Galilee there were 'great crowds' and seeing and hearing the 'throng wondered and glorified the God of Israel.' Mt. 15:29-31
- Returning from the Tyre region going through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee through the region of the Decapolis the people were 'astonished beyond measure' and said 'He has done all things well.' Mk. 7:37
- 'Great crowds' followed Him from not only Galilee and the Decapolis, but also from Jerusalem, Judea and from beyond the Jordan. Mt. 4:25
- When Jesus came down from the mountain and His sermon there, 'great crowds followed Him.' Mt. 8:1 Repeatedly 'great crowds gathered about Him.' Mt. 13:2 It was not just on Palm Sunday. Mt. 21
- As He taught in the synagogues of Galilee, He was 'glorified by all.' Lk. 4:15
- The people wondered 'who has given such authority to men?' When the lame are healed the people exclaimed 'We never saw anything like this.' Mk. 2:12 'And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.' Lk. 26
- In amazement people wondered, 'Can this be the Son of David?' Mt. 12:23
- In His own country in the synagogue 'they were astonished' and asked, 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?' Mt. 13:54-56
- As Jesus heals and speaks, 'all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced...' Lk. 13:17

- At the synagogue in Capernaum they were 'astonished at His teaching' as He 'taught as one who had authority and not as the scribes.' Mk. 1:22

- His 'fame spread everywhere' in Galilee. Mk. 1:27-28
- At times because of the throngs He could no longer 'openly enter a town.' Mk 1:45
- After the feeding of the 5000 they said 'this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' Jn. 5:14
- After He taught in the Temple the people asked in amazement, 'How is it this man has learning, when He has never studied?' Jn. 7:15 'Many believed' and said 'When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done?' v. 31, 'This is really the prophet' v. 40, 'This is the Christ.' v. 41
- They came to Him across the Jordan where John baptized acknowledging 'everything John said about this man was true...many believed.' Jn. 10:41-42
- And it certainly could not have been just the earthquake that affected the centurion and his men. Even the neutral exclaimed 'Truly this was the Son of God'. Mt. 27:54

We of course expect to hear His followers exclaim about Him.

- 'What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?' Mt. 8:27
- They acknowledge, 'Truly you are the Son of God.' Mt. 14:32

But even His enemies exclaim, marvel and are dumbfounded.

- When they heard Him expound on Caesar and God they 'marveled.' Mt. 22:22
- They could not stand before His teaching as when He spoke on Ps. 110, 'no one was able to answer Him a word.' Mt. 22:45
- The Pharisees acknowledged 'You see that you can do nothing; look the world has gone after Him.' Jn. 12:9
- Officers come back to the chief priests and state, 'No man ever spoke like this man.' Jn. 7:46
- It even came to this, 'many even of the authorities believed in Him.' Jn. 12:42

It is this amazing Lord who reaches down through time and beckons us to teach all things in His Word, giving us His own Spirit to guide and carry us forward. Jn. 15:26, 16:7-9, 13-14.

Application of His Healings

Of course one thing not within our power is miraculous healings. He healed, we pray for healing. His healings were a clear manifestation of His love. Do we show love as we teach? Do our words and actions comport with one another as His did or is there a dislocation for us? We are not teachers in some college classroom, a lecturer separate from his students in more ways than one. That was not our Rabbi Jesus.

The record of love in Jesus' healings is total. Just peruse the Gospels: Mt. 4:23 'healing every disease and every infirmity', 12:15 'He healed them all', 14:14 'great throng...healed their sick', 14:34-36 at Gennesaret they 'brought all that were sick...as many as touched His garments were made well', 19:1 at Judea beyond the Jordan large crowds came and 'He healed them' there, Lk. 6:19 'He healed them all'. Naturally this love reflects to all, just as His death was for all and His forgiveness is for all. For us there must be that expansive love as we teach. These are not inanimate objects that we are teaching, but souls for whom He died. As sinfully human as they are so should be our love for them. This we do in trying to convey to them an understanding and backing it up with words and actions of love. He lived what He taught. He was in truth one with man and could extend the sympathy and empathy. We should

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know mankind, as we are a part of it. Reaching out in love is not a long reach.

His Miracles are Unmatched and Likewise His Teachings

Feeding the 4000 and the 5000 are beyond our understanding, except He used His divine power. The winds and the waves obeyed Him. He healed at a distance: the Centurion of Capernaum's paralyzed

servant – Mt. 8:5f., the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter possessed – Mk. 7:24f. And think of the man born blind who was given his sight. Jn. 9:1f. The people acknowledged that this had never been done. So His teachings were unmatched. He stands out by His word and works. He is head and shoulders above what others can do and say. What about us? Do we stand out by our words and works of love?

Of course Jesus could read hearts and know what we cannot know. Think of the Samaritan woman's 'husbands'. Jn. 4:16f. It is all the more important that we 'read' people. We need to be observant enough to 'read' people to teach them. We need to plumb as much as we can their understanding so we can add to that. This takes time and experience. To treat people superficially is a shortcoming we all have. We don't listen enough to them to know them and their thinking. We need to be slow to speak and quick to hear. By misreading people we can so easily miss the mark in trying to teach them.

In connection with this we note He made no retractions and there were no inconsistencies in His teaching. Quite different for us who fall so far short of Him. If we make a mistake, we need to correct it and retract it and not try to protect our proud self by ignoring it. An earthly teacher may also say something at one time that he wouldn't later. This indicates that we learn and expand our experience to do better.

His Character

We at times try to cover up and dismiss our mistakes in one way or another. The great Master gives us the example to strive after in His personal character. Of course no one could convict Him of sin. He demonstrates the divine qualities for us.

Holiness – Very dramatically He drove the money-changers out of the Temple grounds twice: at the beginning of His three year ministry – Jn. 2:13-22, at the beginning of Holy Week – Mk. 11:15-19. He showed that there could be no compromise with sin, no compromising of the truth.

Love – Our God is love; Jesus not only personified it, but is it in word, thought and deed. In the healing of all He showed it. His disciples saw it over and over again. And to His enemies as He beheld Jerusalem, He lamented that He would have gathered them as a hen does her chicks, but they would not. Mt. 23:37 In His final hours this way of His was not altered as He prayed for His enemies, “Father forgive them...”

We seek a balance of these two attributes in our teaching. How can we teach people without a real motive of love. It is one thing to exercise their mind and quite another to imprint on their heart. We teach also against the backdrop of His holiness with our missteps showing up dark against the white. Using Law and Gospel in our teaching is seeking always a proper setting of holiness and love.

We look at one other attribute of the Rabbi – humility. His humility meant that God came to earth for lost mankind. What are we doing? He taught on Maundy Thursday evening about humility when He washed His disciples feet giving as He said an example. We remember how He was self-denying. He put everyone ahead of Himself. Phil. 2:1-8 Is this conveyed by us as we teach? Do we take the lowest seat? Are we the faithful servant who simply does his duty. Lk. 22:27 Or do we vaunt ourselves and put ourselves out as great? His life and words were as one, we strive after that.

Law and Gospel

He taught the Law in all its ferocity and fury. Read Mt. 23:13-36 and remember those “Woe”s. The woman caught in adultery example saw Law and Gospel in use by our Lord. Jn. 8:1-11 He rightly used

both. For Peter who upbraided our Lord for saying He must proceed on to His sacrifice our Lord hurls those words, "Get behind me satan..." Mt. 16:23 And also to Peter on true forgiveness He says it is not seven times, but seventy times seven. Mt. 18:21-22 Our lifelong we are striving to rightly handle these two great teachings, remembering our Master Teacher's use of them.

One on One

Our Lord spoke words that were stark, not vague. He got to the heart of the matter. No subterfuge with Him, as He was directed in His goals. Whether it was a shekel in a fish's mouth or a colt tied, His instructions did not lack. When asked to teach on prayer, His Lord's Prayer is specific and to the point. "Go sell and give to the poor..." cannot be any more stark. Lk. 18:22 As the Master Teacher He built on the known, moved on to the unknown and made it known. Nicodemus heard it clearly, but did not accept it until later. Jesus looked for the occasions and took advantage of them to teach with words that hit the nail on the head. Consider just a few of those teachable moments.

Lk 19:1-10

Certainly we all yearn to meet those people who hunger and thirst after righteousness. These are people who have sought the answers to life's questions in all the wrong places and have found the answers either nonexistent or severely wanting where they looked. They have been brought to the point of not looking within themselves for the solution. They have a conscience that yet speaks to them so that they feel a guilt and even an emptiness.

Zacchaeus had certainly heard to his face and in whispers behind his back what a wicked man he was. This must have had, over a period of time, a crushing effect. Though he had power and wealth being a higher echelon tax gatherer, he was not looked up to. His own people generally despised him showing this in linking his office with the status of open sinners. How might the supreme Roman authorities view him? Doubtless in no better light. They knew the Jews and how they were. And the tax gatherer was looked on as a lackey. Zacchaeus knew very well how many times he had abused his office and cheated in the gathering, as he later admits. To this man in this situation the Lord comes. We should not think that this was just an idle stroll of our Lord. Far from it, for our Lord wanted Zacchaeus to know His love, this one who was anything but loved by all around him. In this we should remember for ourselves that it is our Lord who likewise purposefully sends us. He puts us into situations in which we may show His love. He purposely gives us the opportunities along life's way to reach out. Our Lord looks up into the tree purposely and speaks. He reaches out.

The Lord centers His attention on Zacchaeus. Kind attention is centered on one generally despised. Every soul is precious to our Lord. Our Lord came into the world to save sinners, and here was a very obvious one. The love of God is beyond our human imagination. Aren't we supposed to be kind to those who are kind to us? Don't we just do for those who would do for us? The love of God, on the contrary, means to pray for your worst enemy. The love of God means to return good for evil. The love of God means to pay attention to the unloved and despised. There are so many lost, afloat on a dark sea of life with no rudder and no oars. We come to them with the Gospel rudder and oars.

Beyond giving attention to Zacchaeus on the road, the Lord would go to his house (and this done

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with the obvious disapproval of others). This is beyond the comprehension of the hypocritical world. Where just might we find ourselves at times with the Word?

The immediate reaction of this prospect was, "He made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully." By the demonstration of loving attention this prospect believed. "Today salvation has

come to this house...” Zacchaeus shows that he repents and believes, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.” He does better even than the law of restitution. Such is the power of the Gospel of the living Christ.

Not only was the Lord standing before him, but He was living in his heart. Although in this encounter there is not much recorded of what was said, yet we see the attitude of love that is a prerequisite. We see also that the church of our Lord is not just for the outwardly upright. How many times haven’t you seen some bum or disreputable person and never dreamed of him sitting next to you in worship? Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. When we reach out to the despised of this world we pray that the attention we center on such will raise hope within his heart that he will listen to our words. And in this example from our Lord we see what an attitude of love we must begin with.

Lk.7:36-50

There are many in this life who may respect our Christian religion and yet not believe in our Lord. This Pharisee showed respect for our Lord. He invited Him to his house and provided food. There it ended. There was not saving faith. Simon, the Pharisee, even doubted if Jesus were much of a prophet.

The Lord did have Simon’s ear so He told the story of a creditor and two debtors and related it to Simon and the woman. Simon had the typical attitude of a Pharisee which was self-righteous. This leads inevitably to a ‘holier than thou’ attitude. Simon showed it when he said to himself, “who and what sort of woman this is...a sinner.” Our Lord does not tear into Simon. He has his ear. Though Simon is self-righteous, yet he listens to the Lord.

The Lord uses what we could call the oblique approach. He does not confront Simon with his sin and demand repentance. Instead our Lord tells a story in which Simon must decide a question. That question – Which of them will love him more: the one forgiven fifty or the one forgiven five hundred? Simon is bound to answer “the one forgiven five hundred.” Were our Lord to use a more confrontational approach and demand repentance, Simon would likely bristle and balk. Whether Simon at this time repented and believed or not, he did have a very simple, clear story by which the Spirit could show him later the point.

We can learn from this to use the oblique approach when we have people who are willing to listen to us, who have respect for our belief. Very true, the hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the Pharisee was and is disgusting. Why alienate a willing listener though by stomping on his toes so to speak, such that he rejects listening to you before you get your point across? The Lord further gets the point across by turning to the woman and making the comparison of Simon’s lack with the woman’s tears and wiping His feet with her hair and kissing His feet and anointing His head with oil. The lesson is well taught to Simon of true love emanating from forgiveness of sins. We don’t know if Simon was one of those who said, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” He must have at least thought it.

As Simon is left with something to think about, we would also want to leave those we teach too with many things to think about. In Simon’s case he was left with what was necessary for the Spirit to convict him of sin. And he also was left with the Gospel in his ears as spoken to the woman. We want to be clear in our message as the Lord is here. We also want to give something simple to remember as with our Lord’s story. There are many illustrations in Scripture we could

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use as well as thinking up some out of daily life. The illustrations could be geared to the different situations we meet. And finally it is practice that makes perfect.

Mk.12:28-34

Mark records how after Jesus had answered the Pharisees and Herodians who were sent to entrap Him, that He then answered some Sadducees. The scribe coming upon Jesus' refutation of the Sadducees is pleased at Jesus' answers. Undoubtedly, the scribe, too, disagreed with the Sadducees' teachings and attitude. He sees in Jesus a kindred spirit. And it is not just the wisdom of the Lord's answers, but the content. He then puts a question to Jesus. Upon Jesus answering the scribe's question the scribe acknowledges their agreement. There is a common ground between them. In our teaching it is important to have a base upon which to build. The scribe knows the Law but as yet not the Gospel.

In this case the scribe was attracted to Jesus by our Lord's wise answers. We always hope that others may hear our testimony of the hope that is within us and ask us about it. Yet there are other things which may also attract an inquirer. For instance, are our good deeds visible, or in other words are we doing them? Is our moral character such that our life is a principled one not willing to compromise with the high standard of God's Word? Our Rabbi Jesus sets the example for us. One thing is for certain, wickedness not only does not draw inquirers, but even repels them. Why should any want to inquire after evil? After all we all know how to do that already. Why should any want to inquire after compromising a principle? That is the ever present, pragmatic way of the world.

No question but that we see here the importance of having some things in common, or common ground on which to build a relationship in order to teach. We should even try to establish some things in common. This is also something else to remember. In our selfish, self-centered self-absorbed day there are not that many people who genuinely inquire about others with a real interest. We as Christians should be truly interested in people for whom Christ died. Isn't this part of love?

It is also noteworthy that this encounter ends on a positive note, though not with conversion. Jesus said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." The scribe had understanding up to a point. Why not give credit where credit is due? With this encounter you can imagine a later meeting of our Lord with the scribe and a good discussion ensuing. Another thing to take note of is that in the encounter there is nothing wrong with a compliment to the prospect if he is correct on something. We just guard against any fawning. An honest statement or appraisal as given by our Lord here is in order.

So seek to speak, and do and live each day God's will. And pray that others may see your good works and speak to you with the result that they may join you in glorifying the Lord for His grace and mercy.

Jn. 8:1-11 We can imagine the woman's feelings as her accusers have her red-handed. Stoning is the proper punishment for adultery. And not only does she face that, but before the judgment is to be carried out a public spectacle is to be made of her. It would have to be a very hardened individual who would not cringe before all this. Judgment is about to fall.

Our Lord knew well the hypocrisy that drove the Pharisees to drag this 'sinner' before Him. A lesson must be taught them. And with that lesson for them comes the woman's release. Can you imagine the gloom gradually lifting for her as one by one her accusers went away, from the eldest on down? What relief! Yet she knew well how she deserved judgment. But she was to have another chance. When she says, "No one, Lord," it is hard not to see more in that 'Lord' than mere respect for a good teacher.

Our Lord speaks the Gospel, "Neither do I condemn you." Then He reminds her of the obedience of faith, "Go, and do not sin again." Our Lord of course could read hearts and knew her repentance. We are not privy to the feelings of another's heart and must go by what is said. Our thrust, as is ever the case, is to proclaim the undeserved love and unmerited favor of our Lord.

With an individual in this mood of the sinful woman the law has evidently done its job, so our speaking the law is less. We want to communicate what our Lord said in v.12 “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John. 4:7-39

This is one of the most studied examples of witnessing because our Lord’s conversation with this woman is recorded in such detail. Naturally, too, it is an appealing study because of the immediate positive results. Here Law and Gospel are articulated. Our Lord is casting the net of the Gospel and drawing in this prospect for His heavenly kingdom. And the thing to take note of at the outset is that she is not interested. She did not come to the well to see Jesus and to inquire of Him. But the Lord came for her. It all starts with a request for a drink of water. The Lord moves the conversation from the physical and material to the spiritual. Here we have to learn from Him. How many times haven’t we wondered how to change a conversation from the mundane to the spiritual?

First of all His request takes her off guard. She was not only a lowly woman but a Samaritan at that and He talked to her. He treated her not as an inferior. All are valuable to our God. There is joy in heaven over just one sinner who repents. God would have all men to be saved irrespective of who they are. Jesus shows this concern in His treatment of her. How are we when we teach? Do we convey the idea of ‘now just sit down and listen to me’? Are we pedantic or caring?

Jesus transforms the conversation from earthly water to the water of life. In our everyday surroundings there are examples galore from which to then spiritualize. Our Lord’s invariable use of nature’s examples are well recorded and well-known. Lilies of the field and birds of the air conveyed in image form God’s preservation. The loving care of the earthly shepherd reminded of the infinite care of the heavenly Shepherd. Bread, a door, fishing and so on were used by our Lord to illustrate His truths. The reason why we have trouble moving from an earthly example to the spiritual is because we don’t have our minds so firmly set on the spiritual and consequently can’t see the corollaries and illustration examples.

An integral part of our Lord’s encounter with the woman is the preaching of the law to convict of sin. “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband...” The sinful flesh detests hearing how wrong it is. It easily bristles. We have all had those times when we had to tell someone that he was doing wrong only to have him turn on us. Likely this causes us to back off from being as they say ‘judgmental.’ But it is in love that we rebuke, reprimand and expose sin. As long as we approach another with humility, knowing how sinful we are, we should not hesitate to speak the law. An important point here is that Jesus says it to her privately.

When she exposes to Him what religious knowledge she possesses, He then seeks to correct it and expand on what she knows. We should likewise, but in a spirit of gentleness and humility. Jesus moves onto the end things. We want to give people perspective also on the end of all things.

People get so wrapped up in their little world that they lose sight of beyond. We want to, as our Lord did, move the conversation to eternal life and eternal death. She is definitely interested and He does just that culminating in the Gospel, “Messiah...I who speak to you am He.”

This example of the Lord hooking her as He cast the line and drawing her in is of course by the Master Fisher of men. This is a skill that we must be working on lifelong. Know the Bible, know the Bible, know the Bible. Then it is that the Holy Spirit will give utterance with the Word.

Jn. 3:1-21

While the rich young ruler went away sorrowing, and we do not know the final outcome of his life, with Nicodemus we are certain. Nicodemus also at first went away and did not follow the

Lord. Later, we see his faith demonstrated in his work at the burial of our Lord. This example should give us great encouragement in that we may not see the results at first, though over time and out of our sight the Lord can and does work.

Nicodemus had been brought up in the workrighteousness and hypocrisy of Judaism. This has to account for his not understanding our Lord. But our Lord planted the seeds that the Spirit might later sprout in Nicodemus' heart. On being born again or anew of water and the Spirit he asks, "How can this be?" He does not at this point see that a break must be made with his past. The Lord explains how the bronze serpent prefigured the Christ's sacrifice. This is one of the many Old Testament pictures of the Redeemer. To a man like Nicodemus high in Judaism and therefore familiar with the Word this had to leave an impression. Over and over again in the New Testament record we read of how what the Great Rabbi said or did was to fulfill Scripture. Even if the person we are teaching is not familiar with Scripture, unlike Nicodemus, we can still use the prophetic fulfillments in Christ to point out how He was the Messiah, the Savior. God promised. God fulfilled. As Jesus took this approach, so should we.

The Lord gives a warning to Nicodemus not to join in with those who reject the Son, the Light. And it is here that we have that best known passage of the Gospel, Jn.3:16. Jesus does give Nicodemus the Gospel deeming him an inquirer and not one of those who came to test or entrap. We have to make a similar determination with our people. And we will know by how they received our teaching. One honestly questioning should have the Gospel left with him.

There are many who have loyalty to the wrong thing or person. Nicodemus' was to Judaism and the Sanhedrin. Paul in witnessing to Felix, Acts 24:22f., came across a man who had a head knowledge of the Way, while his loyalty was to Rome, power and money. Paul tried mightily to show Agrippa the truth of Jesus and forgiveness of sins, Acts 26:1f., only to have the king fall back on his power and the Jewish people who had him for king. It is a matter of Christ or... So very, very often many pick the wrong choice. That does not deter us from teaching the right.

Are we alert and ready for such as these? He has sent His Spirit for such as this. Sometimes we may wish, 'Oh if only I could read hearts like Jesus could.' Jn. 6:61, 16:19 But no, He has given His Spirit to work with your spirit. It might seem like it would be easier to know people's thoughts like Jesus did. Lk. 6:8 But the Lord knows our frame and has given His Spirit to give us utterance. We can't see Nathaniel under the tree, but we can read the Word so that the Spirit can work on our hearts and help us to form our words.

Memorable Statements

With any great teacher there will be those statements that his students will recall long after the teacher has turned to dust. Of course our Teacher lives, and His Spirit brings to our remembrance what He said. How many pithy, concise, easily remembered statements do you remember? Don't go to your Bible, but search your mind. What is your list like?

- The Beatitudes – Mt. 5
- One thing needful – Lk. 10:42
- Harvest...Laborers – Mt. 9:37-38
- Wise as serpents, innocent as doves – Mt. 10:16

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- You have one Master, the Christ – Mt. 23:10
- Seven Words from the Cross – Even in His agony He was teaching – Lk. 23:34, Lk. 23:43, Jn. 19:26-27, N. 19:28, Mt. 27:46, Jn. 19:30, Lk. 23:46
- The 'I am...'s of John's Gospel – 6:35, 8:12, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1 – How many can you

remember?

- One that was impressive for people that is not in the Gospels was “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts. 20:35 This is a clear reminder of how great a teacher He was and is.

When we teach we have the choice of using the concise statements of Scripture or our own. The key is that the memorable statement embodies what the point of the teaching was. Then it becomes a hook upon which a memory can bring back so much more.

Contrast

Our Master uses contrasts to fix in people's minds the differences, the points on each side of an issue, the clear choice that faces man and more. It is not grey but black and white with our Lord. Politics may be that drifting cloud that is now here and now there. It is not so with Him. There is heaven and there is hell – the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus. There are 99 and 1. There is the Pharisee in all his hypocrisy and the Publican in his humility. Are we so clear, or do people go away scratching their heads and wondering? It could be in the parables mentioned or in real life that He distinguishes clearly and in detail. A teachable moment for contrasts is in a Pharisee's house. Jesus was invited in. Lk. 7:36-50

- Pharisee – a woman of the city who was a sinner
- No water from the Pharisee to wash Jesus' feet – the woman brought an alabaster jar of ointment and wet His feet with her tears and wiped with her hair
- No kiss of greeting from the Pharisee – she kisses Jesus' feet
- No anointing of Jesus' head with oil - she anoints His feet with ointment
- In the parable – fifty denarii or five hundred

Black is clear against white. When one is lost and 99 are safe it is clear. We should want to find such contrasts in our daily lives also so that people can remember. There is the day and the night. There is the sun which has light and there is the moon which has no light, but only reflects. What contrasts can you think of? How could they be used to teach a spiritual truth?

Our Lord drew word pictures. Can you? Strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel. His teaching was concrete and made more so with contrasts. He sought to move from the earthly to the spiritual. It was no mere mental meandering for Him. It was not a case of words with no real meaning. He was purposeful. Are we?

His Art of Questioning

Questions take a great variety of forms and purposes. They can draw someone in. They can be used as a barb or to agitate someone to think deeper. Of course a lot of us ask questions because we don't know something. This naturally was not the case with our Lord. Our Lord used questions masterfully as when the enemies approached and asked. Mt. 21:25 He was deft and deflected their question. He would answer if they could first answer if John the baptizer was from heaven or men. He turns the tables on His enemies. They go away not answering at all.

What follows is an attempt to classify many of our Lord's questions to show their purpose and how we too can use questions in such a way. The classifications overlap at some points and are only an attempt to see how He operated with this teaching tool.

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1. Shovel or Spade – These questions seek to have people dig deeper than what they know at the time. Many refer people to the Scriptures. What better place to find answers than in the Word.

- Mk. 10:3 “What did Moses command you?” He wants them to get into the Scriptures and go into Genesis deeper.
- Jn. 20:29 “Have you believed because you have seen Me?” Think again and dig deeper and see

how all Scriptures are fulfilled in the Christ.

- Jn. 10:34 “Is it not written in your law?” Dig and go on to see who the Son of God is v. 36.
- Jn. 5:44,47 He accuses them to get them back into the Word. “But if you do not believe his writing, how will you believe My words?”
- Mt. 12:3-5 In answer to accusations He causes them to reflect back to Scripture. “Have you not read?” on the bread of the presence.
- Mt. 10:11 (lawful to heal on the sabbath answers a question with a question) “What man of you if he has a sheep...?”
- Mt. 21:42f. in the parable “Have you never read in the Scriptures?”
- Mt. 19:4 “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning...?”
- Mt. 22:31 “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read...?”
- Mt. 26:53-54 The answer is self-evident. Will the believers grasp it as time passes.

2. A Sharp Stick to Accuse and Expose Sin – These questions are sharply worded based on to whom they were addressed and the situation.

- Mt. 26:55 The question is an accusation against the mob, while what follows is aimed at believers.
- Lk. 13:15-16 “You hypocrites, does not each of you...?” Where is compassion?
- Lk. 12:56-57 “You hypocrites! You know how to interpret...but why do you not know...?”
- Mt. 12:25-26 “...by whom do your sons cast them out?”
- Mt. 17:17 “Oh faithless and perverse...how long...?” He rebukes as He heals.
- Mt. 18:33 “And should you not have had mercy...?”
- Lk. 17:17 “Were not ten cleansed...?”
- Mk. 14:6 “Why do you trouble her?” He accuses at the same time as he comforts Mary.
- Mk. 8:12 “Why does this generation seek a sign?”
- Jn. 6:61 “Do you take offense at this, then what if...?” This is in response to the reaction to hard sayings.
- Jn. 8:41 “Which of you convicts me of sin?” In this questioning He is also reaching out.
- Lk. 22:27 “For which is greater...?” Using contrast He seeks to expose their sin.

3. Prod – This is close to a Stick poking and yet it has the benefit of an attempt to bring around in the questioning. It is milder.

- Lk. 13:2,4 “Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners...?” “Unless you repent...”
- Lk. 22:27 “For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? ...But I am among you as one who serves.”
- Jn. 3:10,12 “Are you a teacher of Israel...?” It is to humble Nicodemus to then build on that.
- Mt. 19:17 “Why do you ask me what is good? One is good...” It is thought provoking.
- Mt. 16:26 “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life...?”

This was said to His disciples and uses the 'man' third party to prod them to think on this. Again

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Jesus uses contrast to great effect.

- Mk. 10:36 “What do you want me to do for you?...” He exposes their selfishness and lack of humility.
- Mk. 5:39 “Why do you make tumult and weep?” He gets the people to thinking and stirs them up to what He'd do. They can think back and consider.

4. Challenge – For those who have faith He seeks to have them exercise their faith that it may grow.

- Jn. 6:5 He asks to test Philip.
- Mt. 9:28 “Do you believe I am able to do this?” They are put on the spot.
- Mt. 20:32 “What do you want me to do? The blind at Jericho must rely on Jesus.
- Mt. 14:31 “Why did you doubt?” It did not require an oral answer, but was to be pondered beyond the immediate for improvement.
- Mt. 15:16 “Are you also still without understanding?” Listen better and have faith expand.
- Mt. 15:34 “How many loaves have you?” It is a fact question with broader implications and it will underline the power of the miracle.
- Mk. 9:33 “What were you discussing on the way?” It is an opportunity to confess sin and based upon confession to advance to the more spiritual.
- Lk. 7:24-25 “...What did you go out into the wilderness to behold?...” He gets them thinking with a string of questions. No longer be superficial.
- Mk. 5:30 “Who touched my garments?” This is to draw out the confession of faith.
- Jn. 21:5 “Any fish?” This will be to emphasize the reality of the resurrection and His rule.
- Jn. 11:26 “Do you believe this?” Martha's opportunity to speak the faith.

5. Hammer – The opposite of the challenge question that presumes faith increase, is the hammer which is even harsher than the poking stick. This is to shatter what had been built by the sinful ingenuity of man's mind like glass that is shattered with a hammer.

- Mt. 11:23 “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down...”
- Mt. 23:33 “...how are you escape from being sentenced to hell? Jesus is in the attack mode.

6. Transitional – Here you can recognize movement from what is understood to new knowledge, from the physical to the spiritual, from what is understood to application.

- Lk. 17:7-9 Three questions are asked to move from the understood to application
- Mt. 16:13, 15 “Who do men say that I am?..Who do you say that I am?” Jesus moves from the general to the personal.
- Mt. 7:9-10 Jesus goes from the normal everyday to the spiritual. Son-bread-stone-fish-serpent. “How much more your Father...?”
- Mt. 12:48 “Who are my mother and brothers?” It has implication within the question. He moves from the physical to the more important spiritual.
- Mt. 16:8-11 The questions reinforce the previous lessons. It goes beyond the physical to the spiritual.
- Mt. 17:25 “What do you think, Simon?...” This is a fact question with broader import. The Lord builds on the known to move to the unknown which He makes known.
- Mt. 9:4 “Which is easier to say...?” The Teacher goes from words to actions to words that have power.

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7. Fishhook – In many of the questions the Lord is seeking to move people toward faith if not directly then indirectly so that later it can come. He casts a line to hook people. When he asked Pilate “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Jn. 18:34, I can't help but think that Jesus is reaching out to the Governor. We have no record of Pilate later believing. Jesus words are more than words as He has a purpose.

8. And of course any study of His questioning art has to include the scene at the Sea with the resurrected Lord preparing breakfast, but more than that. This is transitional for Peter for sure as the Lord moves Peter through the questions to a true humility. It is challenging in that the mind of Peter had to have been racing to reflect and answer.

Jn. 21:15 Jesus asks “Do you love me more than these?” Then in v. 16 Jesus drops the “more than these” in the question. In v.17 Jesus uses a less ardent word for 'love' to ask Peter. It is a lesson for Peter not to be so foolishly proud, but humble and realize his denial in the face of his previous proud pronouncements should cause him to be more careful in what he says. In v.22 Peter's distraction in looking at John is answered with “What is that to you?” Jesus seeks to keep him on the track.

Figures of Speech

Figures of speech enliven a language. Jesus was masterful in using them. This style of His lends itself to learning. Think of His use of the following figures of speech that gave images to retain in the mind to learn from.

- Simile – This says one thing is 'like' another. “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...” Mt. 23:37
- Metaphor – This makes a comparison by saying the one 'is' the other. “Go and tell that fox(Herod...)”Lk. 13:32
- Synecdoche – This figure puts a part for a whole or a whole for a part. We pray for “daily bread” but mean for everything we need each day.
- Personification – This makes something like a person or possessing a personality. “The wind blows where it wills.” Jn. 3:8
- Euphemism – This uses a milder term for a harsher one. “Sleep” is death. Mk. 5:39
- Hyperbole – This is an exaggeration for an effect or an overstatement. Unless we understand how Jesus used this so often we can easily misunderstand. “You blind guides, that strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel!” Mt. 23:24

And there are more that He used to make His teaching a picture to be kept in mind. Of course His parables are extended similes. “No man ever taught like Him.” The thrust of so many parables was the kingdom of God, not an earthly kingdom, but a rule in the heart by our Lord. Do we try to do all we can to convey to our hearers the truths of His Word? We do not have the wisdom of God but we do have His Spirit through the Word. Do we try to use stories as Jesus did to convey simple truths? We are not the Master, though we can learn from Him.

The parables were right out of life. As you saw the life situation, it could then remind you of Jesus spiritual teaching. The parables helped in being hooks upon which He would hang a spiritual truth. For those who do not have faith they need to be explained by us. But for those who have the touchstone of faith we remember what the lilies, and birds were to convey. How many of His parables do you remember?

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Our Lord taught with many parables. Below you have a listing of them and their references. We should assume that He also taught others. What about us? Do we try to use earthly stories to get across to people spiritual truths? As people see the things we talk about of this earth, they can then remember the spiritual truths we attached to these earthly things. We merely follow the example of our great Rabbi Jesus.

This list of parables is alphabetically arranged.

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Alert servants		13:33-37		
Barren fig tree			13:6-9	

Bread of life				6:31-38
Budding fig tree	24:32-35	13:28-32	21:29-33	
Children in market	11:16-19		7:31-35	
Christian light	5:14-16	4:21-23	8:16-18	
Dinner guests			14:15-24	
Divided kingdom	12:24-30	3:22-27	11:14-23	
Feast invitations			14:12-14	
Friend at midnight			11:5-13	
Good Samaritan			10:25-37	
Good shepherd				10:1-18
Great physician	9:10-13	2:15-17	5:29-32	
Grooms attendants	9:14-15	2:18-20	5:33-35	
Growing seed		4:26-29		
Hidden treasure	13:44			
Householder	13:52			
Humbled guest			14:7-11	
King's war plans			14:31-33	
Laborers in vineyard	20:1-16			
Landowner	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-18	
Leaven	13:33		13:20-21	
Lost coin			15:8-10	
Lost sheep			15:4-7	
Marriage feast	22:1-14			
Mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	
Net of fish	13:47-50			
New cloth	9:16	2:21	5:36	
New wine	9:17	2:22	5:37-39	
Pearl of great price	13:45-46			
Pharisee and tax collector			18:9-14	
Prodigal son			15:11-32	
Rich man & Lazarus			16:19-31	
Rich fool			12:16-21	
Salt without taste	5:13	9:50	14:34-35	
Servant's duty			17:7-10	
Sheep and goats	25:31-46			
Sign of Jonah	12:38-42	14	11:29-32	
Tares in field (part 1)	13:24-30			
Tares in field (part 2)	13:36-43			
Ten Minas			19:11-27	
Ten talents	25:14-30			
Ten virgins	25:1-13			
The Sower (part 1)	13:3-9	4:3-20	8:4-15	
The Sower (part 2)	13:18-23			
Two debtors			7:41-43	
Two sons	21:28-32			
Unclean spirit	12:43-45		11:24-26	
Unjust judge			18:1-8	

Unjust steward		16:1-13	
Unmerciful servant	18:21-35		
Unprepared builder		14:28-30	
Vine and branches			15:1-17
Watching servants		12:35-40	
Wise builder	7:24-27	6:47-49	
Wise servant	24:45-51		
Wise steward		12:42-48	

His Sermons

There are three lengthy sermons or dissertations recorded for us: 1) The Sermon on the Mt. - Mt. 5-7, 2) The Mt. Of Olives Address – Mt. 24-25, 3) The Maundy Thursday Evening Teaching – Jn. 14-16 (with His High Priestly Prayer in Jn. 17). To try to learn from these is like dipping a bucket into a lake and drawing out some water. There is so much more. This depth is a mark of His teaching also.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the beatitudes which each start with the word for 'happy'. This reminds us that our purpose is ultimately to give joy to people as we teach them the Word. This is not a happiness like the wicked world gives centered on self and riches.

In the sermon our Lord makes bold statements using the figure of speech – hyperbole. “When you pray you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to pray...go into your room and shut the door...” Mt. 6:5-6 Our Lord is not saying we should not pray publicly, but in contradistinction to the hypocrites He says this. And throughout His sermon He is attacking hypocrisy. It is like a hammer shattering glass. Nothing can remain intact. The personal lesson for each of us is to take the log out of our own eye before we help to take the spec out of our brother's.

The Lord's Prayer is succinct and to the point. It gives us a ratio we should well look to in our prayers of one petition for physical and material and six for the spiritual. He uses contrasts throughout: wide and narrow 7:13-14, light and darkness 6:22-23, God and mammon 6:24. His teaching of humility in alms, prayer and fasting is a solid standard. And He concludes His sermon with a parable of two houses that we can all easily remember. 7:24-27 In this brief perusal it is easy to see how the crowds were astonished at His teaching. Mt. 7:28

His Mount of Olives Address is during Holy Week. While He is near the end of His service on earth for us, He teaches of the end things through prophetic perspective. We of course cannot prophesy future events, yet from what He says we should reiterate. There would be those immediate judgments like the

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destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. There would be the wars, famines, earthquakes until the end. 24:7-8 And ultimately there will be the final judgment. We need to be willing to tell it like it is. He tells of not only judgments but of tribulation and the spread of false teaching. We are to endure the one and combat the other.

The parable of the ten virgins says to be always ready for His return. 25:1-13 It is a black and white contrast with 5 and 5. In verses 14-30 He teaches that we should use what God has given us and then comes contrast again with on the one hand even more will be given and on the other even what one has will be taken away.

He relates the past with Noah to the future of the last days. The past is prologue to the future. Learn from it or repeat its mistakes.

In His Maundy Thursday Evening teaching He gives a behind the scenes look at how the Spirit will be at work. Jn. 14:16-17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-11, 13-14 There is no fuller exposition on the theology of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament than here. What comfort for disciples then and now to know He gives us utterance. This long time of teaching is when He was about to go forth to arrest and execution. A lesson for us that if He would teach at such a time, so should we. What He would face personally would not get in the way of His teaching.

In 14:19 there is the clear warning of what His followers would face. Do we give such clear warning? In 15:1f. we have His parable of the vine which points up how we are totally dependent on Him as branches are on the vine. Do we give such stark pictures that all depends on our possessing God's abundant grace and blessing in Christ? And then in chapter 17 we have His High Priestly Prayer with the spiritual uppermost. Do we pray before we teach, while we are teaching that we get through to people, and after that they remember?

In all of His teaching there are so many points to learn from Him. Here are just a few.
Really reach out with the Word to those beyond the ones who love you and in turn you love.
Pay attention to people and be interested. Why should they listen to you if you don't listen to them?
Leave a clear witness with something to think about.
Study the Word and consider illustrations to get your points across.
Try to establish a common ground for a relationship and a willing ear.
End your teaching on a positive note if at all possible.
When condemning hypocrisy, don't be hypocritical yourself.
Demonstrate your love in words and in deeds.
Work to change the conversation from the mundane to the spiritual.
Speak the law to convict of sin, and the Gospel to convince of salvation.
Build on the religious knowledge that the people have.
To the impenitent leave the law with its barbs.
Be clear in presenting the contrasts of Christ and mammon, etc.
Be patient knowing the Spirit will work in His own time.
And pray about the teachable moment, being specific, before, during and after.

Two Teachers on the Master Teacher

Herman Horne, who was an educator, wrote a book "Teaching Techniques of Jesus" in which he points to essential qualifications for a great teacher and how Jesus is it.

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A great teacher has:

1. "A vision that encompasses the world
2. Knowledge of the heart of man.
3. Mastery of the subject taught
4. Aptness in teaching
5. A life that embodies the teaching"

As we look at these there is no doubt about it, this is our Lord.

1. Jesus had a vision of what He was about on earth and He stuck to it. His vision was of more than just Israel. "I have other sheep; them also I must bring." He knew His end and its fulfillment as the beginning of the worldwide kingdom outreach. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Me." In

His parables as well as in other teaching instruments He taught what the kingdom of God is. He not only commanded that His Gospel should go into all the world, but prophesied that it would. Before He ascended He prophesied “You shall be My witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” Quite a vision and it is still in effect and being fulfilled today.

2. Jesus knew what was in man's heart since He was God. We cannot look into man's heart but we know what Scripture says. “The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.” While Jesus personally “needed not that any should tell Him, for He Himself knew what was in man,” we know from what our Lord and His Word says. A diligent study of Scripture will enable us to “test the spirits” to see if what we behold is truth or error, sincerity or hypocrisy.

3. Jesus was the Master at what He taught. He learned in humiliation, learning by even what He suffered. “Never did a man speak as this man.” There were times when “no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.” He so ably answered. We do not have the nature of God that we may draw upon the infinite wisdom and knowledge that God alone possesses. But we can walk with Jesus and learn. Ordinary men became apostles who people could tell had walked with Jesus. There was a marked change in them and will be in us as He walks with us and talks with us through His Word.

4. Another proof of Jesus being the apt teacher is in those “unlearned and ignorant men” who became the Rabbi's students and then went forth. Or consider the lengthy accounts in John 3 and 4 of Jesus teaching Nicodemus and the woman at Jacob's well. 'Apt' is an understatement of how our Lord taught as He moved them from ignorance to understanding, and from sin to grace.

5. As our Lord lived what He taught what a contrast that was to the scribes and Pharisees and the whole Jewish religious structure. Of Jesus it was said, “This man has done nothing wrong.” “I find no fault in Him.” Jesus taught that “He who loses his life will find it.” He died and rose again. If our life is blatantly different from what we teach people will go by what they see and not by what they hear. The problem for us is the sinful flesh's continuous inclination that we have to fight against. For us as different from the Master when we sin we must repent and say we are sorry. This goes a long way to correct things. This corrects the life picture that might contradict what we teach. With Jesus we have the life to ponder on as our example.

Another educator had the following on how Jesus preached and taught. “The form of preaching of Jesus was essentially Jewish. The Oriental mind does not work the same way as the mind of the West. Our thinking and speaking, when at their best, are fluent, expansive, closely reasoned. The kind of discourse which we admire is one which takes up an important subject, divides it out into different branches, treats it fully under each of the heads, closely articulates part to part, and closes with a moving appeal to the feelings, so as to sway the will to some practical result. The Oriental mind, on the

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contrary, loves to brood long on a single point, to turn it round and round, to gather up all the truth about it in a focus, and pour it forth in a few pointed and memorable words...The Western speaker's discourse is like a chain in which link is firmly knit to link; an Oriental's is like the sky at night, full of innumerable burning points shining forth from a dark background.

Such was the form of the teaching of Jesus. It consisted of numerous sayings, everyone of which contained the greatest possible amount of truth in the smallest possible compass, and was expressed in language so concise and pointed as to stick in the memory like an arrow. Read them and you will find that every one of them, as you ponder it, sucks the mind in and in like a whirlpool, till it is lost in the depths...Even before the meaning has been apprehended, the perfect, proverb-like expression lodges itself fast in the mind.”

This educator has some overlapping of Jesus as the Great Teacher with what Horne says, naturally

since they focus on the same subject. This man lists the chief qualities of His style as:

1. Authority - "The people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Mt. 7:29 He dwelt on the great themes of justice and mercy, God and love.
2. Boldness - "Lo, He speaks boldly." Jn. 7:26 Think of His withering assault on the scribes and Pharisees (Mt.23), priests and Levites (Lk. 10:25-37).
3. Power - "And they were all amazed and said to one another, 'What is this word? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.'" Lk. 4:36 True enough that His miracles underlined his teaching. Yet He was filled with the Holy Spirit without measure so that the truth possessed Him and as He spoke it was hearts and minds being captured.
4. Graciousness - "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Lk. 4:22 The glow and warmth of the Savior was in stark contrast to the hard, proud, loveless words of His adversaries. Think of their objections to Him healing on the sabbath, condemning it as work that should be done on another day.
5. And He addressed men as men, not as of one class or rank. Think of Him in the house of a tax collector and dealing with the lowly just the same as with the mighty. Mt. 9:10, 11:19, 21:31-32 What He taught, He lived.

Conclusion

Think how He rightly handled the Scriptures and directed people into the Word. He spoke in the language of life, from everyday life relating it to the future life. This fixes in the earthly mind that knows the earthly a picture of the heavenly. The gorgeous beauty of lilies waving in the fields; sheep following a shepherd; broad and narrow gates; virgins with the lamps awaiting in the darkness the bridal procession; the Pharisee with his broad phylacteries and the publican with the bent head at prayer together in the temple; the rich seated in his palace at feast, while the beggar at his gate has dogs licking his sores and hundreds more pictures He gave to convey the spiritual that people might understand.

Though no man ever taught like this man did, we follow after to learn from Him in content and style as much as we can.

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