

The Master Communicator

How do teachers get their message across to their students? If they are really concerned that their students learn something from their teaching, how is it best done? Some use humor, some interject stories, some lecture and some interact with the students through questions. Many do a combination of all of these.

Jesus was the master communicator, using every good form of teaching style. His favorite was story telling - those remarkable illustrations of life He called parables. Since this world is His creation, it was easy for Him to make the spiritual applications. His parables were also intended to have special meaning for His followers (His true students) while sometimes confusing the ones who refused to believe (see Mark 4:11-12). *But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples* (Mark 4:34). Those that wanted to hear what Jesus had to say (Mark 4:9) bonded more closely to Him through His lessons as He talked about things they observed every day.

Many preachers try to follow His example with the traditional “two stories and a poem” in their sermons. Often the stories are what the congregants remember. The preacher hopes they will also apply the spiritual principle. Jesus taught us that a good story is memorable and can bring the teaching point back to mind again and again.

Students are more engaged in the learning process when they personalize the lesson: how does this apply to me? Often this identification results from a teacher’s questions. Even when the context cannot result in a verbal response to the question (the class is too large, the teaching is done through print, etc.) questions can put personal emphasis on the subject. Why do I need to study this? Will knowing more about this subject improve my life?

Making a personal application comes through proper use of questions. Jesus’ use of questions often set the stage for His teaching although He interspersed them among His discourses as well. Examine the selected teaching venues from the gospel of John and see how His questions were designed to draw the hearer closer to understanding His teaching.

- *What do you seek?* (1:38). Jesus’ first question recorded in John’s gospel was directed to two disciples who were following Him. Why do you think He phrased His question just so? What did He not say, “Whom do you seek?” What do you want out of life – what do you seek?
- *Because I said to you, “I saw you under the fig tree,” do you believe?* (1:50). Read His encounter with Nathanael (1:45-51). Nathanael had a change of mind from verse 46 to verse 49. What caused his change of mind? Did you ever have an erroneous idea about Jesus? What changed your mind?

- *Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?* (3:10). Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. Why do you think he was having a hard time understanding the spiritual concept of being “born again?”
- *Do you want to be made well?* (5:6) At first glance, Jesus’ question to the lame man is a strange one. The man had evidently been coming to the pool for some time. The Bible tells us that we are in need of the Great Physician (Mark 2:17); however, does everyone want to be made well?
- *But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?* (5:47). The Jews took pride in their knowledge of Moses and his teaching. Why did Jesus say they did not believe his writings? See John 5:45-46.
- *Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?* (6:61-62). *Do you also want to go away?* (6:67). Some following Jesus became confused and offended because of His lessons. After they went away, Jesus asked the twelve if they also desired to leave. Christians are often persecuted and ridiculed for believing in Him. How hard is it for you to stay with Jesus even when others are not with Him?
- *Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?* (7:19). *If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?* (7:23). *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?* (8:23). *Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?* (10:32). Why was Jesus ridiculed, attacked and ultimately crucified?
- *Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?* (8:10). Was the woman guilty or innocent of the charges made against her? Why did Jesus refuse to condemn her?
- *Why do you not understand My speech?* (8:43). *Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?* (8:46). Jesus often said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9, Mark 4:23, Luke 8:8, Luke 14:35). Why did He say certain people did not understand or believe in Him? See John 8:47.
- *Do you believe in the Son of God?* (9:35). Read the entire chapter. What else was healed in this man besides his eyesight?
- *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* (11:9). Jesus made the most of His time, doing more in three years of ministry than anyone else has ever done in a lifetime. Do you feel an urgency to accomplish something for Jesus with what time you have on earth? James said . . . *You do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away* (James 4:14).
- *And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?* (11:26).

Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?

(11:40). One of His most amazing miracles was the raising of his friend, Lazarus, from the dead. However, Lazarus did ultimately die another physical death. What promise did He make to Martha when He said, *He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live?* (John 11:25).

- *Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save Me from this hour"?* (12:27). *Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?* (18:11). Jesus is the God-man, all God and all man at the same time. His anguish and His suffering were real. He did nothing to deserve death on the cross. He chose to live His perfect life and die a sacrificial death for you and me. How does that put any suffering that you may encounter into perspective? If God can be glorified through a circumstance in your life, can you say, "Shall I not drink from that cup?"
- *Do you know what I have done to you?* (13:12). Jesus answered this question in verses 14 and 15. Is it possible to follow His humble and sacrificial example?
- *Will you lay down your life for My sake?* (13:38). Have you ever made a rash claim to God and then fallen back on that promise to witness to His goodness in your life?
- *Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father, so how can you say, "Show us the Father"?* *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?* (14:9-10). Even the disciples who walked and talked with Jesus face to face had a hard time understanding His identity and His mission. With the completion of the Bible and the passing of time, there is more than enough evidence to support Jesus' claims about Himself and His relationship to God, the Father. Do you believe?
- *Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?* (18:34). Do you base your judgment on who Jesus is by what others say about Him or by what He has said about Himself?
- *Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?* (21:15, 16, 17). Three times Jesus asked Simon Peter the same question. What about you? Do you love Him?

Jesus asked probing questions of those around Him. Some believed in Him, some deserted Him, but His questions remain for everyone to answer. If you ask the *Good Teacher* (Mark 10:17, Luke 18:18), *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* [His answer is] *This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent* (John 6:28-29).

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