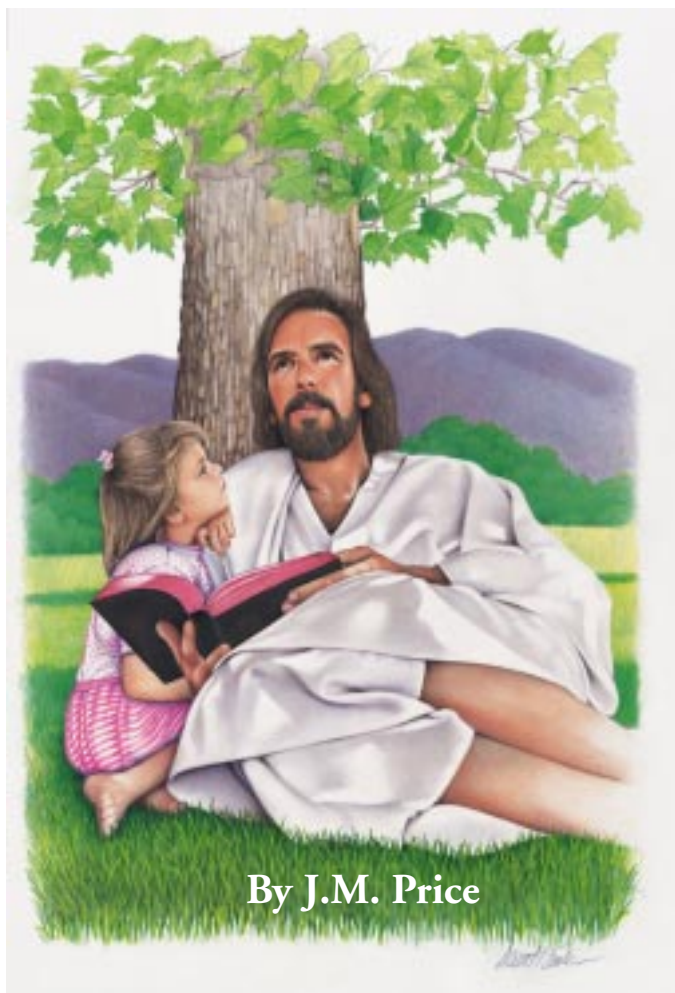


# Christ the Teacher



# CHAPTER I

## HIS FITNESS FOR TEACHING

In every respect Jesus was the ideal teacher. In the fullest sense He was a “a teacher come from God.” Many elements entered into this preparation. Some were human and others, divine. Some were inherent and others, developed. A consideration of them should stimulate and inspire us for our tasks as teachers.

### I. EMBODIED THE TRUTH

The most important element in the qualification of any teacher is what he is himself. One example is worth a hundred exhortations. “What you are thunders so loud I cannot hear what you say.” The best binding for the Gospels is not Morocco, but human skin. It was this fact that led President Garfield to say that his ideal of a university was a log with Mark Hopkins on one end and a student on the other; Emerson to remark that the important thing is not what you learn but with whom you learn.

“Truth incarnate is the only spiritual truth that makes an effective appeal. Hence every teacher must feel, ‘My most effective lesson is myself.’” This is so because truth is caught more than taught. Unconscious influence is more effective than conscious. “The teacher’s words will go only so far as the projectile power of a good life will send them.” It is the heft of the ax that gives it cutting power. Therefore the teacher must be something as well as say something. “The teacher’s life is the life of his teaching.”

Jesus was the living embodiment of truth. He said: “I am...the truth” (John 14:6). He was 100 per cent what he taught. Whatever the subject, he incarnated it and taught from the overflow of his own life. S.D. Gordon has said: “Jesus was before he did, he lived what he taught, and lived it before he taught it, and lived it far more than he could teach it.”

C.S. Beardslee puts it this way: “His ample soul gave ample room for the Holy Spirit’s full anointing...As you face his eye, you are facing fullness of light...He had unlimited reserves of verity, majesty, beneficence, zeal, patience, persistence, and long suffering...He showed dependents how to trust, subjects how to serve, rulers how to rule, neighbors how to be friends, the needy how to pray, the suffering how to bear, and all men how to die...He is the teaching model for all time.”

This incarnation of truth grew out of two things. One was that he was God and possessed in perfection the

qualities of God. He was the only perfect being. He differed from us in kind as well as in degree. Hence we can never approach his perfection.

Also his embodiment of truth grew out of the fact that he studied and experienced it, and made it a part of himself. “Jesus increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52). He learned as a son and brother in the home, through study and association in the synagogue, and through life experiences.

He suffered temptation from the standpoint of self-preservation, social recognition, and the drive for power. The writer of Hebrews says: “It was fitting that he [God]...should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Heb. 2:10).

The Master’s embodiment of the truth affected his teaching in at least two ways. In the first place it gave a note of authority not found in that of the scribes and rabbis—the official teachers of the times. Their knowledge was mainly from without, a matter of hearsay, and they taught largely by quoting from authorities. His was from within and needed not to be supported.

“This teacher was different. He quoted nobody; his own word was offered as sufficient,” commented Bruce Barton. Therefore, he taught with clarity, conviction, and power. The people were “astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22).

By living what he taught he also inspired confidence in his statements. People saw embodied in his practice what he sought to get them to do. They observed how he experienced sorrow, criticism, disappointment, and persecution.

His living reinforced and gave weight to what he said. “The greatest thing the disciples got from his teaching was not a doctrine but an influence. To the last hour of their lives the big thing was that they had been with him.” Therefore, “he appointed twelve to be with him” (Mark 3:14).

### II. DESIRED TO SERVE

One of the most essential elements in the qualification of a teacher is an interest in people and a desire to help. Without that, one is but a “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,” however well he knows the Bible, the pupil, and methods.

Nothing can atone for a lack of interest in the welfare of persons. To be concerned about a large class, a perfect record, or teaching methods is not an adequate substitute for a concern for people.

On the other hand, a love for and desire to serve one’s pupils will go a long way toward making up for deficiency in knowledge and teaching technique. Some of

the most unlikely personalities have been the most effective workers with Intermediates (the most critical age), and the explanation was that they genuinely loved that age group. Sooner or later, pupils realize this interest and respond to it. Everybody loves a lover.

Jesus was not as much concerned about creeds, ceremonials, organizations, or equipment as he was about persons. He saw them like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). If Will Rogers could say he never met anyone he did not like, how much more could that be said of Jesus!

When the Pharisees criticized his disciples for plucking grain on the sabbath, he defended them by saying: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

When the self-centered young miser stopped him by the roadside to inquire the way of life, it is said, "Jesus looking upon him, loved him" (Mark 10:21).

When a man afflicted with the terrible disease of leprosy appealed to him he was so moved with sympathy that he "stretched out his hand and touched him" (Mark 1:41). His heart went out to the critical scribes and jealous Pharisees, to the hated publicans and scorned sinners, to the blind, the deaf, and the lame.

The Master was not only concerned about people's problems; he wanted to do something about them. He had a genuine missionary spirit and said that he "came not to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). He was not too tired to talk to a depraved woman at a well about the Water of life. He was not too proud to make a visit to the home of a despised tax collector. He braved the criticism of the religious leaders to associate with the sinful.

The parables of the lost coin, lost sheep, and lost boy show his concern. His heart went out in sympathy to a needy world and his hand followed in helpful service.

This attitude has characterized every great teacher through the ages—whether it was a Pantaenus as he started the first Christian school at Alexandria alongside a pagan university or a Robert Raikes as he started the Sunday school movement, which has gone around the world. The service motive is indispensable to successful teaching.

### III. BELIEVED IN TEACHING

Jesus saw in teaching the supreme opportunity for shaping the ideals, attitudes, and conduct of people. He was not primarily an orator, reformer, or ruler, but rather a teacher.

To be sure he did not belong to the professional class of scribes and rabbis who gave minute interpretations of the law, but he taught. He was in no sense a "rabble

rouser." He did not trust his cause to mass meeting appeals, ritualistic procedure, or political maneuvering, but rather to the long-drawn-out processes of teaching and training.

L. A. Weigle says: "Jesus used the educational method rather than the method of power politics, or propaganda or force." J. A. Marquis adds: "Teaching was his chief business. He was often a healer, sometimes a worker of miracles, frequently a preacher, but always a teacher.

Jesus' emphasis on teaching is evidenced by the fact that he was generally recognized as a teacher. He was called Teacher, Master, or Rabbi; all of which carry the same general idea as when Nicodemus said: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God" (John 3:2).

At least forty-five times in the Four Gospels he was called teacher, but never preacher. L. J. Sherrill says that by including all of the terms equivalent to teacher we have a total of sixty-one.

Norman Richardson points out that "Master" is used sixty-six times in the King James Version, fifty-four of which are from the Greek word meaning teacher or schoolmaster.

Forty-five times he was referred to as teaching and eleven times as preaching, often coupled with teaching, as when he is spoken of as "teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). Not only the twelve, but also other disciples, and even his enemies, called him teacher.

Likewise he called himself teacher saying: "You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am" (John 13:13). Also he called himself "light" which carries the idea of instruction. In this connection it is interesting to note that John the Baptist was always called preacher rather than teacher.

Another indication of his stress on teaching is the terminology used to describe his followers and his message. They were not called subjects, retainers, or comrades. The expression "Christian" is used only three times in the New Testament to characterize them, and one of these in derision.

Over against this is the fact that the term "disciple," which means "pupil" or "learner," is used 243 times to describe his followers. And his message is spoken of as "teaching" (thirty-nine times) and as "wisdom" (six times) rather than as address or sermon.

The New Testament writers do not use the term "Sermon on the Mount" but instead Matthew says: "He opened his mouth and taught them" (Matt. 5:2). So it should be called the "Teaching on the Mount."

Also the Master's emphasis on teaching is indicated by the enthusiastic and aggressive way in which he carried on a teaching activity. He taught everywhere and at

all times—in the temple, in the synagogues, in the mountain, by the seaside, by the road, by a well, in the homes, at social gatherings, and in private.

His work carried a didactic atmosphere rather than that of impassioned address, for people felt free to ask him questions, and he in turn asked them questions.

He trained a group of teachers to carry on his work. During the closing days of his life work, he devoted himself to teaching the small group of disciples who gathered about him. And he commanded these disciples to go to the ends of the earth, make disciples (enlist in the school of Christ), baptize them (a teaching ordinance), and then teach them all the things he had commanded (Matt. 28: 19-20).

Jesus thoroughly believed in teaching, an indispensable prerequisite for any teacher. He gave himself to it and forever dignified the calling.

The supreme glory of the teaching profession consists in the fact that when Jesus Christ faced his life work—he chose to be a teacher.

George H. Palmer had this spirit when he said: “So much do I believe in teaching that if I were able to do so I would pay for the privilege rather than be paid for it.

#### IV. KNEW THE SCRIPTURES

Another essential for a teacher is to know the Bible, for that is the primary material he is to use.

Jesus was thoroughly qualified in this respect. This was evidenced in the temptation when he met each of the devil’s efforts to trap him by quoting the Scriptures (Matt. 4: 1-11).

It is seen in the conversation that took place on the walk to Emmaus when he explained the teachings in the Scriptures relative to himself (Luke 24:27).

During his ministry he quoted from at least sixteen of the books of the Old Testament and showed thorough familiarity with its contents. He not only knew the Scriptures but also had assimilated them to such an extent that he could apply them freely to the issues of the day.

This mastery came not only because of his deity but also because of his study. The beginning was in infancy in the Jewish home whose very atmosphere was religious and educational. B. A. Hinsdale says: “The very household duties the mother performed molded her children in accordance with national discipline.”

Harold Wilson states: “Even as he [the Jewish child] lay in her arms, his eyes would be drawn to many objects, the religious meaning of which his mother would explain to him.” Among them were the kissing of the fingers which handled the Scripture parchments kept over the door or strapped to the wrist or forehead, the sight of

the colored fringes of his father’s outer garment reminding of the commandments of the Lord, the daily prayers and thanksgiving especially at meals, the weekly observance particularly the lighting of the Sabbath fire and lamp, the annual ceremonials such as the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles, and the solemn presentation to God of the firstborn male of flock and herd.

So in the home Jesus learned the Scriptures and grew in wisdom as well as stature.

Also he learned in the synagogue, which was practically universal in his time. Attendance was customary if not compulsory. Luke says: “He went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day” (Luke 4: 16). Wilson thinks Jesus attended at least once each Sabbath for twenty years or more.

Services were held on the Sabbath, Monday, and Thursday, and feast and fast days. They were definitely instructional.

The Law (first five books of the Bible) was read by a reader, explained a verse at a time by an interpreter, and applied to the lives of the people. So it was covered in three to three and a half years.

The second lesson of the day was taken from the prophets and read and explained three verses at a time. It was that which Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth, as mentioned by Luke 4: 17-19.

Sometimes questions were asked and answers given.

In addition, certain Scripture passages were recited in concert. Thus Jesus learned the Law and the prophets and was able to confute the rabbis with the question: “Have ye not read?”

Connected with the synagogue was also an elementary school for boys, meeting each weekday. It was required wherever there were as many as twenty-five pupils, and attendance was compulsory.

In fact no orthodox Jew was supposed to live in a town without one, or on the opposite side of a stream from one unless the stream was safely bridged.

The boy started at about six, and until ten studied the Scriptures beginning with Leviticus. He covered the Law, history, prophets, and poetry, thus getting the religious, moral, and ceremonial teachings.

From the tenth to about the fifteenth year he studied the oral interpretations of the Law, and at thirteen he became a “son of the Law” and a responsible member of the synagogue congregation.

“That he must almost have known the Sacred Scriptures by heart is clear,” says Canon Farrar, “not only from his direct quotations, but also from the numerous allusions which he made to the Law, and to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, Hosea, Micah, Zechariah, Malachi, and above all to the book of Psalms.”

Jesus was able to hold his own not only with the learned rabbis in the Temple at the age of twelve, but also with his severest critics at all times.

## V. UNDERSTOOD HUMAN NATURE

One is not able to apply the Bible to life until he understands the pupil and his needs. Just as the physician must be able to diagnose his patient before knowing what medicine to prescribe, so the teacher must understand human remedy.

In the last analysis we are not teaching the Bible but persons. Even the Scriptures themselves were given for teaching, correction, and discipline “that the man of God may be complete” (2 Tim. 3:17).

Jesus not only understood the Jewish mind in general as to factions and sects, but he was also a master in penetrating the heart and understanding the inner workings of the individual mind. The Bible says: “He himself knew what was in man” (John 2:25).

How much that sentence carries perhaps no one will ever be able to know. Certainly he was able to tell whether his hearers were good or bad, attentive or inattentive, friendly or unfriendly, interested in his instruction or uninterested, understanding his teaching or confused by it, agreeing with what he taught or critical of it.

Had he not had this knowledge, he would not only have been unable to teach as effectively as he did, but also he would have been caught often in the traps his designing enemies set for him.

With this knowledge he was able to know his learner’s abilities, needs, attitudes, and motives and to teach in the light of them.

While the scribes thought within themselves that he blasphemed when he told the palsied man his sins were forgiven, “Jesus, knowing their thoughts said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?” (Matt. 9:4).

When the disciples complained at his saying that they must eat of his flesh and drink of his blood in order to have life, “Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them . . . , ‘There are some of you that do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that should betray him” (John 6:61, 64).

When the Pharisees and Herodians sought to trap him, “knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, Why put me to the test?” (Mark 12:15).

When he saw Nathaniel he said: “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (John 1:47).

When the Samaritan woman was asked to call her husband and said that she had none, he answered, “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” (John 4:17-18).

He knew people and taught to meet their needs.

## VI. MASTERED THE ART

We do not know that Jesus consciously and purposely studied teaching methods and procedures, and sought deliberately to follow them. Possibly he did. Probably he did not.

But he had such a grasp of teaching as to be thoroughly at home at the task. He set forth no particular psychological principle, educational theory, or pedagogical practice; yet he grasped the essential elements in all of these and used them effectively.

He used methods with perfect freedom and efficiency. Apparently they came to him naturally. Out of the fullness of his resources he met each teaching situation as it arose and used the procedure needed.

He was so far ahead of others that the best modern teachers have not caught up with him. We shall ever be learning from him.

That he was a master of the teaching art is shown by the fact that he used from time to time, at least in embryo, practically every method in use today—questions, lectures, stories, conversations, discussions, dramatics, objects, projects, and demonstrations. We shall study these more in detail later on.

His mastery of the teaching art is also evidenced by the procedure that he followed. When broken up into their component parts his teaching activities are found to have the proper beginning, development, and conclusion. To this we shall give attention later.

His approach was direct, his illustrations to the point, and his application well made. He was master of the art of teaching.

In this mastery of the teaching art we shall do well to follow his example. Consecration, fervor, and faithfulness will not make up for a lack of knowledge of teaching methods, nor will they atone for weakness in procedure.

As a rule, teachers are not born, but made. At least they are “not born made.” Careful study and painstaking practice are necessary. Everything else being equal, God can use a trained teacher much better than an untrained one. We owe it to ourselves and our pupils to be the best teachers we possibly can.

In the light of Jesus’ perfect personality, spirit of service, confidence in teaching, knowledge of the Scriptures and humanity, and grasp of teaching methods and processes he was the best qualified teacher the world has ever known.

He was indeed the “Master Teacher”. He is our incomparable model, and we shall ever be learning from his methods as well as his messages. As Martha has said: “The Teacher is here” (John 11:28)

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Answer the following as you read:

# CHRIST THE TEACHER



## CHAPTER 1

- 1.1 One \_\_\_\_\_ is worth a hundred exhortations.
- 1.2 Every teacher must feel, "My most effective lesson is \_\_\_\_\_." Truth is \_\_\_\_\_ more than taught.
- 1.3 "The teacher's \_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of his teaching."
- 1.4 S.D. Gordon has said: "Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ before he \_\_\_\_\_, he \_\_\_\_\_ what he taught, and \_\_\_\_\_ it \_\_\_\_\_ he taught it, and \_\_\_\_\_ it far \_\_\_\_\_ than he could \_\_\_\_\_ it."
- 1.5 Jesus learned as a son and brother in the \_\_\_\_\_, through \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_, and through life \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.6 The Master's embodiment of the truth gave a note of \_\_\_\_\_ not found in that of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.7 "The greatest thing the disciples got from His teaching was not a \_\_\_\_\_ but an \_\_\_\_\_. To the last hour of their lives the big thing was that they had been \_\_\_\_\_ Him."

- 1.8 An essential element in the qualification of a teacher is an \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.9 A \_\_\_\_\_ for and \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ one's \_\_\_\_\_ will go a long way toward making up for deficiency in knowledge and teaching technique.
- 1.10 Christ had a genuine \_\_\_\_\_ spirit and said that he “came not to be \_\_\_\_\_, but to \_\_\_\_\_” (Matt. 20:28).
- 1.11 The \_\_\_\_\_ motive is indispensable to successful teaching.
- 1.12 Christ was often a healer, sometimes a \_\_\_\_\_ of miracles, frequently a \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.13 At least \_\_\_\_\_ times in the Four Gospels he was called \_\_\_\_\_, but never \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.14 Not only the twelve, but also other \_\_\_\_\_, and even his \_\_\_\_\_, called him \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.15 The term “disciple,” which means “\_\_\_\_\_” or “\_\_\_\_\_,” is used \_\_\_\_\_ times to describe his followers.
- 1.16 Jesus thoroughly \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, an indispensable prerequisite for any teacher.
- 1.17 During His ministry Christ quoted from at least \_\_\_\_\_ of the books of the Old Testament.





1.18 This mastery of scripture came not only because of His \_\_\_\_\_ but also because of His \_\_\_\_\_.



1.19 List six objects in the home life of the boy, Jesus, that directed His attention to Scripture Truth.

A. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

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C. \_\_\_\_\_

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D. \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

E. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

F. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1.20 Wilson thinks Jesus attended at least \_\_\_\_\_ each \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ years or more.

1.21 In the last analysis we are not teaching the \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_.

1.22 Everything else being equal, God can use a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher much better than an \_\_\_\_\_ one.