

11. Jesus Showed How to Teach Through Sermons

Jesus taught the crowds many times with sermons. Each time Christ gave a sermon to a large crowd, the disciples were there to see how He used sermons to speak to the people. As the disciples watched how Christ taught the people, they were learning how to teach the people through sermons. By studying his sermons in the book of Acts, we can see that Peter learned from the example of Christ. In the same way, we want to show developing leaders how to teach through sermons.

Probably the best-known sermon given by Christ, to the multitudes, is the sermon known as “The Sermon on the Mount”. We will use that sermon to illustrate many of the principles Christ showed to the disciples about how to teach effectively.

In Matthew 5:1-3, we read, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’” The first thing we notice is that Christ sat among the people as He taught them. Although just the first is quoted here, we see that Matthew 5:3-12 has what we call the beatitudes. Christ began by giving the attitudes people can develop in their lives if they want to be blessed. Christ showed, by example, a very important lesson.

- ◆ a thought becomes an attitude
- ◆ an attitude becomes an action
- ◆ an action becomes a habit
- ◆ a habit becomes a lifestyle
- ◆ a lifestyle determines a destiny

Christ showed, by His example in this sermon, that to be an effective teacher, we must begin with the thoughts and attitudes of people if we are going to be effective in transforming their actions, habits, lifestyles, and destinies. Romans 12:2 expresses that thought so well when it says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” People are only changed as their thinking is changed. If we are going to develop teachers that transform lives, we must help them learn to teach to affect the thoughts and attitudes of those who are listening.

According to Matthew 5:13-16, the second thing Christ did, as He taught, was help those who were listening begin to understand that their lives affected others. Christ showed His disciples how to help people realize the impact they have on others. To do this, Christ compared those who were listening to salt and light. Salt can add flavor, preserve, and heal. However, if salt loses its savor it becomes useless. Christ showed the disciples how to add flavor, preserve, and heal through their sermons. Light can give light to the world or it can be hidden. Christ showed the disciples that as people saw their good works, this would cause them to glorify the Father in heaven. Here, we see that Christ helped His disciples realize that their actions would have either a positive or a negative impact on people.

The third thing Christ did, as He taught, was show the disciples that He had come to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17-20) and show the disciples how to explain the law to others. In His sermon, Christ quoted, and then explained, several of the commandments. In Matthew 5:21-22, Christ showed that a person can kill with words just as easily as with a weapon. Then, in Matthew 5:23-26, Christ taught the importance of reconciliation when there have been angry words. In Matthew 5:27-32, Christ taught that adultery begins in the heart long before it leads to actions. In Matthew 5:33-37, Christ taught that we are not even to make oaths, but become people who can be counted on to keep our word.

The law allowed an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Through His sermon, Christ showed the disciples how to begin to practice the new commandment He would give them the night before His crucifixion. He explained the importance of returning love for evil instead of evil for evil. In addition to explaining the importance of returning love for evil, in Matthew 5:38-48, Christ also gave several practical illustrations of ways to show love.

Christ next explained the difference between outward religious practices and inner heart attitudes. The world wants their good works to be noticed. In Matthew 6:1-4, Christ taught the importance of doing our good works in secret. The world also wants their religious practices to be noticed. In that day, many people made long public prayers so they could be seen by other people. In Matthew 6:5-8, Christ taught the disciples to pray to the Father, instead of trying to impress people. In Matthew 6:9-15, He taught the disciples how to pray instead of just saying prayers. Then, in Matthew 6:16-18, He taught the disciples how to fast.

In Matthew 6:19-24, Christ went on to explain that there are two main masters in the world. People either choose to serve God, or they choose to serve things. The thing people choose to serve tells what is in their heart, because people will show what is in their heart by who or what they have chosen to serve. When people serve things, those things will cause them to worry. As a result, Matthew 6:25-34 gives seven reasons not to worry:

- God gave you life – He will provide for your needs
- God provides for the birds – God will provide your food
- God says you cannot change your height by worrying, so why worry
- God provides for the flowers – God will provide for your needs
- God knows the things you need
- God will provide as you put Him first in your life
- God says we have no idea what will happen tomorrow, so why worry about what might not happen

Next, in Matthew 7:1-6, Christ showed the disciples the importance of encouraging people to examine their own lives, instead of judging others. Christ said it is very easy for people to find fault with others, especially if they are guilty of doing the same things. As a result, Christ showed the disciples how to help people examine their own lives first.

Then, in Matthew 7:7-11, Christ taught that God will answer prayer. The disciples needed to

realize that when they had a need, they needed to learn to pray and ask God to meet that need. Christ reminded them that the Father loved them much more than their human father and that He would certainly meet their need. In Matthew 7:12, Christ showed them how to be proactive by helping them understand that they would fulfill the Old Testament if they treated others in the way they wanted to be treated. Then, He reminded them, in Matthew 7:13-14, that they had to make a choice to go either the wide way or the narrow way.

In Matthew 7:15-20, Christ taught the disciples how to recognize false teachers by the fruit their lives and teachings produced. False teachers will always produce bad fruit. Then, in Matthew 7:21-23, Christ warned the disciples that not everyone who claims to follow God is actually following Him. Such people will often point to their works instead of their relationship with the Father. Christ concluded His sermon, in Matthew 7:24-27, by telling the people that they could choose to be wise or they could choose to be foolish. We see, in Matthew 7:28-29, that this sermon had a great impact on the people because Christ spoke with authority and did not speak like the scribes. The scribes would quote other scribes. In contrast, Christ had shown the disciples how to explain the Word of God. When explained and applied, the Word will transform lives.

The disciples had the opportunity to see how Christ taught in order to change lives. Over a three-and-a-half-year period, they heard Christ preach many other sermons. In each of His sermons, Christ showed the disciples how to change lives. We could give the following summary of some of the things that Christ showed the disciples by His example. He showed them:

- ◆ The importance of dealing with inner attitudes.
- ◆ The importance of their own example in their actions.
- ◆ The importance of dealing with conflicts in relationships.
- ◆ The importance of explaining the meaning of the law.
- ◆ The importance of showing love, even to those who did evil.
- ◆ The importance of serving others.
- ◆ The difference between saying prayers and praying.
- ◆ The way to have treasure in heaven.
- ◆ The seven reasons why they did not need to worry.
- ◆ The danger of judging others.
- ◆ The importance of bringing their requests to the Father.
- ◆ The way to treat others.
- ◆ The importance of choosing which way they would follow.
- ◆ The way to recognize false teachers.
- ◆ The fact that not all who claim to follow God actually follow Him.
- ◆ The importance of choosing whether to be wise or foolish.
- ◆ The power of teaching and explaining the Word of God, rather than just quoting others.

It is a great privilege to show developing leaders how to teach the Word of God so that it will change and transform lives. The Word is living and powerful and will do its work as we learn to follow the example of the way Christ taught the Word. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to teach through sermons.

