

12. Jesus Showed How to Teach Through Questions

One of the ways Jesus taught His disciples was through the use of questions. This is illustrated many times in the Gospels. One day, Peter was asked if his master paid the temple tax. Christ used that opportunity to help Peter learn, by asking a key question. Matthew 17:24-25 says, “When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, ‘Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?’” Here, we see that Christ was helping Peter to understand Christ’s relationship to the Father in a new way.

Then, after letting Peter think about His question and answer it, we read, in Matthew 17:26-27, “Peter said to Him, ‘From strangers.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.’” Christ made certain that Peter understood. Then, Christ helped Peter to carry out His words by providing Peter with the temple tax, both for Peter and for Himself.

In Matthew 16:13-16, we see another example of how Christ taught the disciples with questions. Those verses say, “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” In these verses, we see that Christ used questions to give the disciples the opportunity to tell the opinions they had heard from others. However, in the last question, Christ changed from the opinions of others to the convictions of the disciples themselves.

Matthew 16:21 tells us that, based on the answer of Peter, Christ began to teach the disciples about His coming death. That verse says, “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” In this case, the question was like a quiz. The disciples had to recognize that Christ was the Son of the living God before they could begin to learn about His coming death and resurrection. In this case, Christ used His questions to get the disciples to tell what they believed about Christ.

Christ also asked a question to show the new relationship He had with His disciples. In Matthew 12:47-50, we read, “Then one said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.’ But He answered and said to the one who told Him, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’” By asking this question, Christ helped His disciples begin to understand the new relationship they had with Him.

Christ also used questions to help His disciples learn how to think, not just tell them what to think.

In John 6:5-6, we read, “Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” The disciples had to begin to learn to think from the viewpoint of Christ, instead of just giving their opinions. Christ knew what He was going to do, but Philip had never thought about what Christ could do.

By his answer, Philip shows that he still had to learn a lot in order to learn how to think. John 6:7 says, “Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” Philip did not even think through the question Christ asked him. Philip answered that they could do nothing, because they didn’t have the money. Instead of thinking through who Christ was, and what Christ could do, Philip just said it was impossible to help. To help Philip, and the other disciples, learn to think in a new way, as a result of His question, Christ told the disciples. In John 6:12, “So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.’” Jesus showed them that they had to think about who was asking the question, instead of thinking about what they had.

On the road to Emmaus, Christ also used two questions to get two of His disciples to think. Luke 24:17-19 says, “And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’ Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?’ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ So they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.’” When Christ asked the question, “What things?”, the two quickly told Christ both what had happened, and what they thought about what had happened.

By their answer, they showed that they did not really believe what the women had told them about the resurrection. That gave Christ an opportunity to explain the Scriptures to them. Luke 24:25-27 says, “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” As a result of His questions, Christ was able to explain many things to the two. In fact, Luke 24:32-33 shows that those two questions changed their lives. We read, “And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together.” Here, we see the power of questions to change lives.

Christ also used some other questions, after His resurrection, to change lives. Peter and six other disciples went back to fishing, because Peter felt that he had failed when he denied Christ. Christ used three questions to restore Peter and transform his life. The first is found in John 21:15, where we read: “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’” Christ just asked Peter if Peter loved Him more than the one hundred and fifty-three fish they had just caught. Even though Peter did not answer with the same word

for love, Christ told Peter to feed His lambs.

Christ followed that question by asking the same question two more times. John 21:16-17 says, “He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” Peter had denied Christ three times. Now Christ used those three questions to tell Peter three times that he still had a ministry of serving Christ.

Later that morning, Jesus asked Peter one more question to help Peter realize that he had to focus on the priorities Christ gave him for his own life. In John 21:21-22, we read, “Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, ‘But Lord, what about this man?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.’” Jesus used a question to let Peter know that his priority was not to find out what would happen to the other disciples. Instead, his priority was to follow Christ.

Christ took a question of the disciples, and, in the answer, showed the disciples what was to be their priority for the rest of their lives. Acts 1:6-8 says, “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” The last words of Christ on earth helped the disciples to focus on their spiritual priority, not a political priority. They were to begin sharing where they were and take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Christ wants us to have the same priority in our lives today.

Questions are a very powerful way to make people think and help them develop their spiritual priorities. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn how to think by asking them key questions that can change and transform their lives.