

13. Jesus Taught to Transform Thinking

In Exodus 18:20, we read, “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.” In this verse, we see that God gave Moses three things to do in order to equip the people for ministry, so they could share the work with him. Moses was told to teach the people the Word of God. He was told to show the people how to walk. He was told to show the people how to do the work of ministry.

We might say that balanced teaching and equipping transforms the head (knowledge), the heart (character), and the hands (ministry). In our next three topics, we will see how Christ focused on all three of these things, not just knowledge. Today, we will see how Christ helped the disciples to grow in their knowledge of the Word of God, so it was able to transform their thinking.

As Christ finished what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:28-29 says, “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” In Matthew 28:18, we read, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Christ was able to teach with authority, because all authority has been given to Him. However, based on that authority, Christ said, in Matthew 28:19-20, “‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Christ commanded us to make disciples based on the fact that He is the One who has all authority.

The phrase “teaching them to observe all things” is a key phrase for us to understand, if we are going to be obedient to Christ and teach as Christ did so that it transforms thinking. The word “observe” means *to guard, to keep or to obey*. It means that we are to teach people how to obey the Word of God. Notice that the scribes and Pharisees taught the Word of God, but they did not teach and show people how to obey it. Matthew 23:1-3 uses this same word, when it says, “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.’”

In these verses, we see that the scribes and Pharisees taught what Moses said in the Law. However, Christ pointed out that they did not teach to transform thinking. The scribes and Pharisees taught one thing and did another. What they were teaching had not transformed their thinking, their attitudes, or their actions. They taught like they were teaching history: “This is what Moses said and this is how various teachers have explained what Moses said.” They spent their time telling what other people said about what Moses wrote and did not show the people how to obey the Word of God by their actions. Today, we have many people who are doing exactly the same thing. We are called to follow the example of Christ, not the example of the Pharisees, as we teach to transform lives.

Christ did not just tell people to forgive. Instead, Christ showed how to forgive by His own

example. We have a perfect example of how Christ showed people to forgive by His words and actions on the cross. Luke 23:34 says, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Here, we see that Christ showed them how to forgive by asking the Father to forgive the people for putting Him on the cross.

The disciples needed that example, because they had to learn how to forgive by seeing an example they could follow. Luke 17:3-5 says, “‘Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.’ And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’” The disciples had to be shown how to forgive, not just hear that they should forgive. As a result, Christ gave them a perfect example of how to forgive as He hung on the cross.

Jesus did not just tell the disciples that they should share the message of repentance. He showed them how to share the message of repentance. Matthew 9:10-13 says, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” Christ went to where people were, sat down and ate with them, and while eating with them, shared the way to repent of their sin.

The disciples were shown many lessons by the example of Christ. He could have preached many sermons about taking the Gospel to the lost. Instead, He showed the disciples how to spend time with the lost and share the message of repentance with them. By eating with the tax collectors and sinners, Christ showed the importance of accepting people. In this case, He was teaching them, by example, how to accept others while the Pharisees showed their lack of acceptance of tax collectors and sinners by their example. The disciples quickly saw that Christ did what he taught, while the Pharisees did not.

Another example of the way Christ showed the disciples how to transform their thinking is given in the new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” For more than three years, Christ had shown the disciples how much He loved them. They had seen that love, by His actions, throughout the time they followed Him. In this new commandment, Christ was saying, you have seen the way that I have loved you; now, you imitate my example, and love one another in the same way. Over those three years, His actions had shown them how to love, before He commanded them to love one another.

Perhaps the greatest area Christ had to transform the thinking of the disciples was showing them that they could not depend on their own strength. When Christ was on the mountain, with Peter,

James, and John, where He was transfigured, the rest of the disciples were being asked to cure a boy who had seizures because he was demon-possessed. The disciples learned that they were powerless to help. As a result, the father spoke to Christ when He came down from the mountain. The father said, in Matthew 17:16, “So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” The disciples had to realize that they were powerless in their own strength.

We go on to read what happened after Christ healed that child. Matthew 17:19-21 says, “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.’” The disciples had to learn to pray and let God work, because they could do nothing in their own strength.

As Christ spoke to the disciples, the night of His resurrection, He reminded them again that they did not have the power to share the message of His death and resurrection in their own strength. Luke 24:44-49 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.’” Christ had to transform their thinking by reminding them that they were powerless in themselves.

Christ said a very similar thing just before He returned to heaven. Acts 1:4-5 says, “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” Christ wanted them to clearly understand that they must witness in the power of the Holy Spirit, not their own strength. Then, the final words of Christ before returning to heaven are given in Acts 1:8, where we read: “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.” They would have power to witness as they yielded their lives to the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to transform their thinking by learning to obey the Word of God and learning to yield their lives to the Holy Spirit.