



## Transcriptions

### Teaching as Jesus Taught

Ted Ward

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Once upon a time, there was a man who had an immense job and a limited time. Many people who read of him later referred to him as being an unusual educator. This man somehow seemed to have some sense of his destiny and be aware that he wasn't going to live very long. But he used up thirty years of his life before very many people ever heard of him. Then he went out and collected the strangest group of people, some rather unpromising types, and organized them into a little group and proceeded to begin a training experience that lasted for three years. And he changed the world.

And one of the reasons that he was so successful was because one of the first people he recruited, he put to work raising money. The second person he recruited was an academic dean. The third person he recruited was a recruiter of excellent students, and they built the most fantastic educational enterprise that has ever been seen in the Mediterranean area.

Now those of you who were paying close attention to my little story are aware that, at one point, I began to move away from reality into fantasy. Some of you even know where it was. Isn't it interesting? Only three years to transform the world, to set in motion a process that was destined to last until the ultimate judgment of God of the universe. And he didn't build a school.

Now, as a matter of fact, we are talking about Jesus Christ and, of course, at this point it's necessary to point out that there were a number of other things he didn't do. He never rode in an airplane. He never went to Lausanne Congress. He was not at all enthusiastic about A.D. 2000. He had no idea about a bicycle. Now if I ask today would Jesus have ridden a bicycle? Would he have gone to Lausanne? Would he have flown in an airplane? it becomes nothing but a conjectural question. But I strongly suspect that, of those questions, the easiest one to answer has to do with the bicycle. I'm quite confident that he would have enjoyed the bicycle.

You see the reason we don't ask that kind of question is because we have so much historical smarts. We say well, the bicycle wasn't invented until, at least, fifteen years after his death, or something. The reason Jesus didn't ride a bicycle is because they hadn't invented one yet. I'm convinced of that. It has nothing to do with the moral ethics of bicycle riding.

The reason Jesus didn't build a school is because he decided not to. They had already been invented—basically, the same vocabulary that we use today. Take the words dormitory, campus, lectern. Where do those words come from? They are the Roman equivalent of the Greek vocabulary out of the Greek school that existed 400 years before Christ. Jesus didn't build a school because he didn't want one. If the Lord of the universe had wanted one, he would have built one. Do you believe that?

Now, what he did was a strange sort of education, but it wasn't regarded as all that strange because these people had come through a different kind of socialization. And they understood that a lot of things in this life can be learned through your encounters with interesting people whether or not you're paying tuition. In our society, you really don't start learning until you pay tuition and are on the enrollment list. Right? Nobody ever asked Jesus to be on his enrollment list because he didn't have one. Now I wouldn't want even to raise the question seriously, today, in this short amount of time as to whether or not we really believe that the disciples were with him constantly for those next three years. My own view is they probably weren't; that these were people who largely were from the poorer side of the tracks, and they probably had to work. And I find them rather instinctively jumping right back to work again after the resurrection. They seemed to know that when he said I'll meet you up in Galilee, that's what he meant. I'll, again, meet you in Galilee. And that would have helped us to account for some of the passages in the synoptic problems of the several calls of the disciples that don't all seem to square up. I think Jesus rounded them up periodically and out they went on the countryside. Where did Jesus teach? He taught his disciples on the go. You find him at dinner parties and he takes *that bunch* along with him. You find him in the temple taking *that bunch* along with him. You find him on the mountainside with *that bunch* along with him. Going to the other side of the lake with *that bunch* along with him—that bunch was always along. Whenever there was anything worth reporting in the gospels as the gospel writers—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit have seen fit to provide for us—whenever Jesus is reportable, Jesus is doing his thing with *that bunch*.

Now I suspect that *that bunch*—the inner twelve—was surrounded, then, by another bunch and yet another bunch. There are several clues to this that suggest he had a kind of an intimate, close, continuous relationship with this twelve that he had handpicked. But he also had a relationship with another set that were close because, even on one occasion when he wanted to send them into a field-training event, he had a lot more than twelve people ready to go. Remember that one?

And then there were a lot of other times when he had yet a larger group around him into the thousands. But, unfortunately, when we begin to analyze how Jesus taught—again, teaching, education, schooling—we tend to look at how he talked when in the presence of a great number of people. And we tend to use his models of teaching from those huge events rather than looking at his interaction in the small events. I submit that there are some important things to learn about the interaction of Jesus with people. Jesus had a very intimate relationship with a small group within the twelve. He did not treat everyone alike. He treated people differently because of who they were and where they were in their growth and development. And one experience he knew was going to blow the minds; blow the minds of anybody he took along so he only took three whose minds were the most ready to be blown in a constructive way. And he took, who was it? Peter, James, John, and they were privileged to see this magnificent experience that we call the Transfiguration. Why didn't he take all twelve? Apparently, usually he did take all twelve. When, after the resurrection, he had some reconciling to do with Peter, you find him sitting quietly after the fish breakfast saying, "Peter, do you really love me?" He goes one-on-one with Peter. There were other times when he'd gone with Peter in a conversation where the others of the twelve were listening in. He asked them all, on one occasion: What are you hearing? What are you learning from what you're hearing about people's reaction to Me? What does this tell us? Oh, they said, some of the people are saying that you're this prophet or that prophet or somebody else. And he says, that's interesting, what do you think? What do you think? The Lord of the universe said, what do you think? And in his name, a lot of teaching today never asks, what do you think? A lot of what we do in the name of Jesus Christ is very convergent teaching. Much that Jesus did was very divergent. Now if you will take the diagrams comparing convergent reasoning and divergent reasoning, I think I can show you rather quickly one of the things that's wrong with us as Christians because I think I've got a picture of it right there [not available].

The experiences we have in life in the convergent reasoning model are because of a fixation on truth brought together to specifics. And, again, if there's a good question, there's also a good answer. Then learning is wrapped up in connecting the right good answer with the right good question. The problem with that is that you can end up with all the right answers which fit only for the moment and, even a week away, you don't have anything left.

There is a certain workshop that is provided around this nation in the interest of parachurch activities that is very popular and teaches people a lot of the right answers about how to deal with your young people, how to deal with people, and a lot of a lot of very interesting stuff; very formula-oriented, very pat, and it sounds ever so convincing at the workshop experience. If you look at it closely, analytically, it's basically a very convergent model. It converges everything on a body of specifics that seem so good they're almost like carrying home a box of diamonds. And this box of diamonds, in the form of a loose-leaf binder, will take care of you. I took a group of graduate students to a repeat event of this particular workshop on one occasion and we interviewed, particularly, the people coming back. They're easy to spot because they brought their box of diamonds back with them. And we particularly targeted those people outside the arena in the city of Chicago, a huge crowd. And we asked them, "Why did you come back?" We found interestingly enough that these were people that were convinced of the worth of the diamonds in this box, but they were self-critical of their ability to apply those. So, we were dealing there with people in these interviews who were largely discouraged but held themselves responsible for it and they were back. Because they knew that that man in there and this box of jewels really was the answer. And, again, they got the same convergent saying they again felt good at the end about their box of jewels and

they again went home and found that life doesn't give you that many things that exactly conform to the pattern you've been expecting to hear. And their capacity to deal divergently with reality, as it really occurs, was not helped; it was maimed. We do a lot of maiming in the name of Christian education.

Now am I not concerned with truth? I hope no one has heard me say anything against truth. When I suggest that fixation on "truth,"—quote, quote—is part of what's wrong, I want you to notice that truth is in quotation marks there. It is not the *real* truth that is being fixated; it is the *easy* truth that is simply concerned with verbal propositions: knowing the right things to say, knowing the acceptable answers, and getting people to conform to those right answers and those right responses without really a depth of understanding. That's what's wrong with us and, in some respects, it will always be wrong with us until we take a harder look at what Jesus Christ was all about as a teacher.

Jesus Christ was concerned with the exploring of knowledge, the exploring of experience, the opening up of people to their world, the encounters of people with each other that allowed him to ask from time-to-time, what do you think? And, of course, on that occasion when Peter came back and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus was just so enthusiastic about his praise of that response and his appreciation for Peter in him being able to give that response, and I'm sure it must have been embarrassing to Peter. Our Lord is quite capable of becoming very excited about human insight, but he also reminded Peter: Don't get proud of yourself; don't get proud of yourself. There are insights there to be had because of the revealing power of God the Holy Spirit through his Word.

Our Lord was involved with his disciples in such a way that we really miss the point if we look at how he lectured to large groups. He did this largely because they were there, and they were needy, and one of his habits was always to meet people where they felt their needs. We don't do that very much today, not even in the name of evangelism. Most of the courses that I have examined in the field of evangelism suggest that you have to have a very clear-cut agenda, and your task is somehow to get the other person onto your agenda so that your line of reasoning makes sense to that person, and that's called evangelizing. And I find that our Lord Jesus Christ never once changed the subject on anybody, never once changed the subject on anybody. He was a competent teacher. He was a brilliant teacher because he knew how to take the presenting characteristic, this present understanding, the present compulsion, the present need of a person and simply relate to it, simply.

You cannot find in Scripture any place where Jesus says to a person, oh, I understand you are having a great deal of trouble walking. Your friends have to carry you around. Well, let me tell you, I'm not interested in that problem. I'm interested in some other problem. In fact, the one example in Scripture where you say well, yes, he did. It sounded a lot like that one because the four friends had him figured out. Right? They tore the roof up. They put the guy down and Jesus made the mistake of saying, "son, thy sins be forgiven thee". Seems to disprove the generalization, doesn't it? Wait a minute; take a hard look. What did that young man say as they were letting him down as he gazed up at Jesus? How did that young man sound? What did he say? Does anyone know what he said? There's a one-word answer: nothing. On that occasion, our Lord had to go on a diagnosis that he himself was making because the young man didn't make one. And the people all around him criticized him—hey, what are you doing messing around with forgiving his sins? Can't you see that's not the problem? He says, let me tell you, I've got power in both domains. I've got power in both

domains. And so you can see that, too, I'm also going to raise him up. Rise up, take your bed and walk.

But when people came to him and said, I am blind. He did not say, my friend, I appreciate that and if I were blind I would really I would regret it, too, and I can understand your sense of loss and regret. But let me tell you, dear brother, you have a spiritual problem and if you can get right with God, God will make you able to cope with that blindness a lot better than you can now. That is what we do today, quite often in the self-righteous view that that's what Jesus did. Jesus didn't do it. Somebody came to him and said I'm blind. Jesus says, let's work on it. Somebody came and says we got leprosy. He says, let's work on it. Somebody came and said—the lady didn't even say, she just touched him, and there was such a responsive process that she was healed and Jesus knew it. Remember that? He was in the business of *responding* to people in terms of how they defined their needs. If there is anything magic about Jesus' teaching, it is that simple thing.

Take a look at the well at Sychar. This woman is treating him like you would expect. She's Samaritan, he's Jewish; argue with him. This isn't his territory; give him a hard time. He wants a drink. Come on, fellow, you don't ask me for a drink. I'm nothing but a Samaritan; you Jews are above us. You wouldn't want to ask me for a drink, would you? She plays with him. But when she finally sees past her own prejudices, what does she recognize in Christ? I'll tell you. It's right there in plain language in the Scripture: she rushed off into the city, and she was the first city-wide evangelist—a woman, a Samaritan woman, and a woman who had a questionable pedigree—was the first city-wide evangelist because it says she brought the whole community of Sychar out to Christ and she did it on the basis of a two-line evangelistic thrust. You know what the two lines were? It would value you to know this.

Number one: come see a man who has shown profound interest in me. Now if Taylor can do it, I can do it, too. That was a paraphrase. Come see a man who has told me everything I have done. Now being translated into simple language that is, *this* man is interested in *me*. You know there are a lot of people in this world who are mightily convinced; mightily convinced when Christians say, I'll tell you why I belong to Christ—he has shown a profound interest in me. That is one of the most persuasive evangelistic messages any of us can provide anybody else—a direct testimony that Christ is interested in me. Never mind he's interested in you; he's interested in me. That's my testimony. I'm not here to declare to you he's interested in you; I'm here to tell you he's interested in me.

Would you like to know him? And that was really her second question. She raises the question, that's her second thrust. She says, could this be; could this be the Messiah? In effect, she says to them divergently, what do you think? One proposition: he's interested in me, and one question: what do you think? There's a beautiful formula for evangelization. That's the way Jesus related to people and she spotted it and she carried it out, and the whole community of Sychar came and the disciples lost their composure, I'm sure, as the whole community of Samaritans came rushing out. I suspect if Peter had had his wits about him that day he would have asked, where's my knife? And maybe he did. It would have been a rather threatening menacing moment if the whole community of Sychar comes storming out led by this woman. That's what it says in the Scripture. Our Lord was himself a teacher who showed profound interest in people and got on their wavelength. You know, one of the problems of our time is that we, as Christians, have got to spend more time getting on other people's agendas.

I've some good friends that operate a training center for Christians who are going to be working with or who are already working with Muslims. They operate this training center in the south side of London, a district that is largely Muslim. And, by the way, two major cities of England now have Muslim mayors. England is rapidly becoming clearly Islamicized. The Islamic movement will be one of the realities of the year 2000, folks. At any rate, this training center operates in the hands of several converted Muslims, a Pakistani particularly. He's a good friend of mine. And an Egyptian. And I forget what the others are. And then there are two or three Americans and two or three Britishers. And one of the things that they have come to believe in this center is that, in general, Americans train themselves too much with reference to information about Islam and too little with reference to how to relate to Muslims. In other words, the preparation that Americans usually use in order to mission Muslim communities is too much wrapped up in information. In fact, they believe that there is a hazard in Christian missionaries spending too much time becoming informed on the Koran because if they become too informed on the Koran, they tend to say things about the Koran. And, generally speaking, Muslims don't like to say things about the Koran or hear anybody else say things about the Koran. You can quote it now and then, but you don't say things about it. And it's particularly embarrassing because most Muslims only know a handful of phrases from the Koran and they have never really thought much about what those mean. So what you do is you get a kind of a power one-ups-man-ship because you know so much about the Koran and they don't. And there's no Muslim apparently ever been won to Christ by a one-ups-man-ship by an American. The Muslims only respond to the same thing that Jesus presumed that people responded to and that is a profound interest in them, and that takes time.

I believe that one of the things we learn missiologically about Jesus Christ is that as his incarnation represents God's hand of missioning the fallen universe of mankind. As God incarnate comes among us to reveal God in flesh, he does so in a four-phase exercise that then is picked up by the apostle Paul and is taught by the apostle Paul to others, including Titus. And the four phases we will talk more about in the mission sessions later, but I would introduce them now as part of the teaching strategy of Jesus.

Jesus, first of all, spent thirty years getting in tune with people. He spent thirty years getting in tune with people. There aren't a lot of American missionaries who are willing to spend three years getting in tune with people. You say, well, we haven't got that kind of time. I started out with the proposition that this man only had three years and his task was not just to get some converts but to change the world. He took thirty years to get in tune with people and to develop the credibility that as sufficient maturity and meaning in his society would have allowed him to have, so that as he began to open up in teaching and speaking, people were in a position to be able to accept.

Then he engaged in a second phase: three years of working together, participation, interaction, involvement, sharing his task with a group of trainees—three years.

Then a third era opens when, at the resurrection, he begins to prepare them for what he had warned them of before, but he gets much more clear and serious about it: they're going to have to stand alone; he's going to leave. And that separation phase is one that, in much of missions history in the last two centuries, we just completely overlook. People learn to stand on their own feet when they have to stand on their own feet just as surely as children learn to grow up when they have to grow up. And it is possible to seriously handicap a young person by disallowing that person to make decisions, making all the decisions for that person, and ultimately controlling that person on into

adulthood, and ultimately you have a handicapped person on your hand. Our Lord left his disciples behind.

But, four: he said, in reference even to this preparation for separation, I will revisit you; “lo, I am with you always,” which is part of the very text of the Matthew 28, the Great Commission, “lo, I am with you always.” In other words, I am revisiting you. I am not really apart from you. Our Lord is revisiting us now. He is not here with us in that sort of condition that would allow us to build that perpetuating dependency. We’re none of us going to take a break for supper until Jesus stands up and indicates he’s hungry. We’re not going to do that. We’re all going to have to make our own decisions here. But Jesus revisited.

Now if you take a look at the apostle Paul. The most clear example of the apostle Paul’s strategy, copying Jesus, was in reference to the details we have about his encounter in Athens when his first event was to build some bridges, get acquainted, begin to relate, move in to the synagogue, move into the marketplace, and day by day learn Athens. Then there was a period in which, after the Aeropagus, there were even some of those of that debating society, the Aeropagus, who said to him, we want to learn more of you. We want to encounter. We want to deal. We want to relate. And the other disciples came along and joined and they had a period of time of ministry, and then they left Athens. It is part of God’s missiological strategy. It is an educator’s strategy to be careful not to build dependency. From time to time, people say to me, oh, I ran into one of your disciples. Now I have a lot of people that have studied with me over the years. Michigan State, I had 97 Ph.D. graduates in the field of Educational Research. Seventy-one of those are, today, in missions in ministries for Jesus Christ: 71 of 97. So it is quite possible for a person to say, hey, I ran into one of your former students, because they are in various kinds of leadership roles around the world and I’m used to it. People say, hey, I ran into . . . And often it’s a perfect stranger who comes to me and says that. I know it’s a perfect stranger, a person who’s never been with me very much, because if a person is with me very much they discover something and that is I don’t like to hear that. And I have a rather cold way of simply looking back at the person slowly, staring, as if a little bit dumb, and I say, I have no disciples. Oh, well, no, I mean, a person, ahem, who, uh, who studied with you. Oh, there are many of those. One of your former students. Oh, there are many of those. Who did you run into? And then I will turn it around and a little more graciously say let me tell you what I was trying to say when I said, I have no disciples. I am not here to create disciples for myself. I am part of the Great Commission responsibility of creating disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s different.

You see, our Lord was building disciples for himself but, even in his ministry, he knew that there would come a time that he would have to stand alone. And if, so help me, I build my disciples, what am I building? I’m building dependency. I’m building a trust relationship that is too dependent. I believe we need a mentality within the church that says our educational tasks must be focused on helping people stand alone. Not stand alone, isolated; not stand alone, lonely, but stand alone in terms of vitality, standing on one’s own feet; not being leaned up against another. The name Jones comes to mind with reference to discipleship gone bad. Does that ring a bell? In the name of Jesus Christ, we must be in the business of emulating our Lord who was building up people who could become competent to function well as people of God, and then agree with them for re-visitation.

When we do our teaching, we need to be concerned about divergent reasoning; looking at experience with people so that we can understand experience. And that has a convergent quality to

it. We name our experiences together. We share our experiences. But then ultimately, as we think applications of ideas, we move outward. Now let me show you how that relates to a piece of secular research done by Benjamin Bloom, an outstanding scholar at the University of Chicago, who wrote this piece called *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, in the Cognitive Domain*. And I've laid it out for you upside down because we start at the bottom and we teach for information as facts or statements to recall. Eighty per cent of what is done in theological education in studies that I have done, it qualifies only at Level I: information to be recalled as facts or statements.

Level II is, at least, the capacity to think of those statements and ideas as ideas and being able to put them in one's own words. And that's one of the ways you test for whether or not Level II has occurred.

Level III is concerned with information as ideas to use. In other words, it's the application level. How do you use that? What do we do with it? So, what do we do differently? And now we begin to get functional. Functionalism sets in at Level III and education that stops short of Level III will be short of functionalism.

Level IV: ideas as a basis for analysis. Especially in the West, the first thing we do after we get beyond application is we begin to use ideas to take other ideas apart. And we know how to break things down and to look at the pieces like a clockmaker who, at the end of the day, goes home happy because he's got the whole thing all torn up; all the pieces laid out and labeled.

There's another kind of a watchmaker, who's a Level V watchmaker, who doesn't go home at the end of the day until he's got it all back together again and ticking. That's the synthesizer.

And that is a high use of ideas: to build other ideas, but it has a high degree of divergency in it, do you see? Because when you build ideas synthetically, you begin to move into a realm of ideas that haven't yet been formed; that haven't yet been tested. Look, Paul said to the church at Thessalonica, test things, take it all in, look at everything, but test it. I think, sometimes, the church of Jesus Christ in our times says, don't look at anything then you won't have to test it. And we never then get to the last, which is really the critical thing for Christians, and that is: using ideas as a basis for making wise choices. Think about it; think about it.

Through it all, both our Lord Jesus Christ and Paul, a chief exemplar, were keenly aware that they were, in themselves, examples to those who were following. Paul could even come to the place where he described himself as being an appropriate example: "You can even copy on me, even as I am copying on our Lord." I have a hard time saying that myself because I know myself too well. In fact, sometime within a long span of eternity, I'm going to get down to my agenda item on the list of question marks and I'm going to talk to Paul in a quiet corner, is that what you really meant to say, Paul? I'm not convinced of it. But Paul, in Ephesians 5:1, for example, is very well aware that the teaching that we see in Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's truth in a lively form—a Person and we are persons in teaching.

Jesus had three years to change the world and he didn't build a school. But he knew how to relate to people and he knew how to help people stand on their own feet. Can we do any less in the name of education for leadership in the church?