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“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”  
(James 1,22).

## Jesus the Master Teacher

**Central Truth:** Like Jesus, you teach by what you say and what you do.

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“I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one any day. / I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way. / The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear; / Good counsel is confusing, but example's always dear.”

Each of us is a teacher. We teach by what we say and we teach by what we do. We influence members of our families, our friends, our business associates, and even people we do not know.

Jesus was called “teacher” during His personal ministry on earth (John 3:2). John 13:1-17 reports how Jesus taught by actions and by words. It relates well to I Corinthians 9:19-23, which reports Paul's method of teaching the things of God. In these two texts we find three principles about how we share God's message today. We teach by (1) example, (2) words, and (3) lifestyle, even if we are not “elected” by the church to teach.

### Teaching by Example (John 13:1-5)

Jesus' washing the feet of His disciples is the greatest lesson on humility to be found in all the Bible. The disciples called Him “Lord and Master” (John 13:14). He was that to them and is that to us. Yet He who is greatest performed the task usually reserved for a lowly servant in the household. What an example!

But His act was more than an illustration of a truly humble spirit. It also instructs us about how we are to serve. Look at the procedures here on

teaching spiritual principles.

**Teach at the opportune time** (verses 1, 2). Jesus did not reserve His instruction for the Sabbath when people assembled in the synagogue. He taught in the day and at night. He taught in private homes and in open fields. He taught sitting on a mountain and sitting in a boat. When opportunity arose, He taught.

That is the way Christian testimony should be given. Do not wait for a person to go to church and hear the “professional” teacher or preacher. Speak to your child in the home or automobile. Speak to a business associate over coffee or on the golf course. Take advantage of the moment when an opportunity is present.

Jesus taught this lesson on humility when He knew that within twenty-four hours He would be betrayed, tried, condemned, crucified, and His body would be buried. The quiet moments following the observance of the Passover meal provided an excellent opportunity for Him to teach His disciples. He took advantage of the moment to teach.

**Teach with the proper motive** (verse 1). John reports “*when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*” What was Jesus' motive as He instructed the apostles? He was moved by a clear knowledge of the significance of the hour and by His unfailing love for them.

What is to be your motive as you instruct your child, grandchild, other relative, friend, or associate? It is knowledge of the lateness of this hour in human history and your unfailing love for that person. In that way, you can be like your Lord.

**Teach in the appropriate manner** (verses 3-5). Jesus taught by action and words. The lesson was demonstrated and explained. No one had a cause to misunderstand.

Jesus taught in spite of who He was. John 13:3 says three things about who He was: (1) The Father had given all things into His hands; (2) He had come from God; and (3) He would soon return to God. There was none greater than He. Yet, in spite of who He was, He performed the act of the lowly servant. He said, “*He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all*” (John 3:31). Yet He washed the disciples' feet!

Jesus taught in spite of who they were. The disciples did not deserve such attention from Him. That is why Simon Peter drew back. They were arguing over who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Luke 22:24), but He taught them how to be the lowliest. Jesus taught according to need.

You and I must do no less.

### **Teaching by Words (John 13:12-17)**

It was not enough that Jesus washed the disciples' feet. He made sure they understood how that applied to them. He said, *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet”* (John 13:14). Notice how that teaching developed.

**Understand spiritual things.** *“Do you realize the significance of what I have done?”* Jesus asked (verse 12). They did not. Those who say they want to “live a testimony” (meaning they do not speak for their Lord) will find that many people do not relate their honorable lifestyle to Jesus and thus lead sinners to faith in Him. You must both live and speak in order to be a good witness.

**Recognize what has been done.** *“I . . . , your Lord and Master, have washed your feet”* (verse 14). A clear statement of our Lord's actions is essential to a good Christian testimony. The Christian's life is a response to the work of Jesus in his life. A good witness always looks back to the sinless life and substitutionary suffering of Jesus and applies it to current needs.

**Explain what Christian workers should do.** Jesus said, *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you”* (John 13:14, 15). The divine principle is that greatness is marked by service, not by position. A paradox of the Christian life is, “The way up is down.” (See Mark 10:44.) Your testimony for Jesus must include instruction on how to respond to His work of grace. State the principle of surrender to one Lord. Jesus said, *“The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him”* (John 13:16). Jesus is the Lord who has sent us. We are servants who are sent. Therefore, we are not greater than Jesus — not even as great. He performed the lowliest service to His disciples; how can we do less than serve one another in His name?

Conversion occurs when one surrenders himself to Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Christian life is a continuing state of surrender to Him. The ideal for the Christian is that he be “clothed with humility” before the Lord (1 Peter 5:5).

**Enjoy the blessings of obedience.** Jesus said, “if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). The life of humble service ends in glorious rewards. Speak and act like a person who is a new creation in Christ. Let your life and lips express the gospel you profess to believe. Mix

being with doing, and speak so that what you are is reflected in what you do and say. That is the key to effective Christian testimony.

Answer this question: “Whom can I influence this week by my lifestyle and my speech?” Set that person upon your heart. Ask God to bring the two of you into contact so you can share the truth of Jesus with him or her. And as you become aware of an opportunity, act upon it without fear or delay. God can and will use you.

### **Teaching by Lifestyle (I Corinthians 9,19-23)**

Jesus teaches us to surrender pride and render humble service to one another. The apostle Paul accepted that admonition and applied it to his personal ministry (the same as you and I are to do). In his travels over the then-known world, the principle of teaching by example and instruction had an unusual application. It meant he must become “all- things to all men” in order to save some of them (I Corinthians 9:19-23). How does that principle apply to you and people with whom you are associated?

**Surrender personal interests to reach a greater goal.** Even if you are “free from all men,” it is worth the cost to make yourself “servant unto all” that you might lead some to the truth in Christ (I Corinthians 9:19).

There is no person too low for you to stoop to help. There is no person too high for you to reach to help. You are here to serve any person in the name of Jesus. *“The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”* (II Corinthians 5:14, 15). When Jesus “died for all,” He included every person of the whole human race in that redemptive deed. Since He showed no favoritism in His death, neither should we show it in our witness.

**Apply your energies to a ministry to every person without prejudice.** Become “*all things to all men*” so that you might “*by all means save some.*” Every person is precious to God. You will never meet a person whom God does not love, for whom Jesus did not die, and to whom you should not witness.

Follow this example. (1) Witness to Jews who consider themselves to be the “chosen people” of God, but who need to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ the same as the Gentiles. (2) Witness to Gentiles who are “*afar off*” but can be brought to God by a proper response to the Christian gospel. (3) Witness to the overscrupulous who are bound in legalistic laws of clothing, food, etc., but need to learn of the freedom God gives in Christ. Paul's

example teaches us to make no distinction between people in sharing the truth of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

The principle is this: Establish a “common ground” with every person. Jesus found water to be the common ground with a sinful woman at Sychar (John 4). Paul found his Jewish heritage to be common ground with many people he met in his mission work. The aged apostle John wrote to *‘fathers,’* “*young men,*” and “*little children*” in his first epistle, having a common ground of faith in Jesus with each of them (I John 2:13). We are one with the whole human race. We share the same nature; we suffer the same fallen state; we need the same Savior; we are offered the same salvation; we are bought by the same redemptive sacrifice; and we are saved by the same Lord.

Thus we are teachers, each of us. We are in the world to be a living and speaking testimony to the truth of God in Jesus. We are God's agents. We should be faithful!

Acts and words must agree in order for our testimony to be accepted. When they are not consistent, this adage comes into play: “Your actions speak so loudly that I cannot hear a word you say.” Inconsistency is the fastest possible way to ruin a testimony. Be a Christian in your spirit. Live like a Christian in your conduct. Talk like a Christian in your conversation. And you can have an impact for Christ.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. In what sense is every person a teacher?
2. How did Jesus teach by His example (John 13)?
3. How can you be sure your example teaches the right things?
4. How does Jesus' example teach you to be humble?
5. How can you put the lesson on humility into practice this week?
6. How did Jesus teach by His words (John 13)?
7. How can you make your words a testimony to the truth of God?
8. How does Paul teach you to surrender your personal interests?
9. In what practical way can you show a selfless spirit this week?
10. How can you “minister like the Master” after this study?