

Jesus our Teacher

Rich Nathan
February 24 & 25, 2018
The Real Jesus
John 7:14-19

What I'd like you to do in beginning today is to think back to a person in your life who you thought was a great teacher.

- An elementary or middle school or high school teacher
- A college professor that really influenced you
- A coach in a sport you played
- A music or art or drama or dance instructor
- A family member
- A pastor or youth leader
- Somebody who really impacted your life for the good by their teaching

Can you think of anyone that you have influenced by? What was it about that person that made them a great teacher?

Educational experts tell us that great teachers share some common characteristics. Those of you who are teachers, look over this list I've constructed and maybe you have some of your own items you'd put down. You might say, "This is what I believe makes a great teacher." Here are some of the characteristics from educational experts:

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Great teachers set high expectations for all students

My favorite teachers in school were not the ones who let everyone slide by and gave out A's without any work. My favorite teachers in school were tough! They demanded a lot of me and everyone else. They set the bar really high and they helped me jump it because they believed that every child was capable of great achievement.

I had a 6th grade teacher who required the class to memorize long epic poems. To this day, I can recite much of Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" and his poem "Gunga Din" and Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" and a number of other epic poems. I memorized these because I wanted to please her.

Just this year, I got back into Bible memorization and I made a commitment that I'm going to try to memorize at least two Psalms every month. I didn't pick Psalm 119, for those of you familiar with the Psalms.

Great teachers set high expectations for their students. Here's the second thing:

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Great teachers form strong relationships with their students

Lots of people love their subject matter. They're totally into history or economics or math, but they don't love the students that they're teaching. Their classroom style may be one of intimidation. Great teachers are warm. They are accessible. They make themselves available to their students.

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Great teachers are masters of their subject matter

They constantly spend time gaining new knowledge in their field. They instill a hunger in their students to learn about this particular area.

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Great teachers teach in ways that are memorable

Did one of your favorite teachers or coaches or pastors have these little sayings that really stuck with you? They repeatedly said something that changed your thinking about an area? Great teachers teach in a way that's memorable.

Last week, we started a discipleship series that we're titling "The Real Jesus". What I want to do in this series is try to dig beneath all of the layers of tradition and religion and myth concerning this person Jesus so that we might encounter the Real Jesus. The one who grew up in a small town of Nazareth in a place called Galilee. The Real Jesus who not only lived 2,000 years ago, but as a result of his resurrection, is alive today still changing people's lives.

Teaching was one of the main activities of the Real Jesus when he was here on earth. We constantly find Jesus teaching in the temple, in synagogues, in homes, as he travels, and even from an anchored boat that was pushed off from the shore in the Sea of Galilee. He teaches crowds, he teaches small groups of his own pupils, he teaches men, he teaches women. Jesus continues to teach today by his Holy Spirit which he pours out on those who put their faith in him.

Slide John 14:26

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

It's not uncommon to hear in the more conservative wing of the church, "Jesus is more than a teacher, he's a Savior who died on a cross." That's true. "Jesus is more than a teacher, he's a miracle worker who heals the sick and casts out demons." That's true.

“Jesus is more than a teacher. He’s the resurrected Lord who ascended into heaven.” That’s also true. But Conservatives are so insistent upon Jesus being more than a teacher that they fail to underline the truth that Jesus was and is still a teacher. He’s more than a teacher. But Jesus is not less than a teacher. You will not truly understand the Real Jesus until you encounter him as your teacher. I’ve called today’s message, “Jesus our Teacher”.

Let’s pray.

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How does the Real Jesus resemble other great teachers?

Think back over a few of the qualities that I mentioned before regarding great teachers. Do you think Jesus had these qualities? For example, great teachers set high expectations for all students. Did Jesus set high expectations for us as his students? Just think about Jesus’ most famous teaching called The Sermon on the Mount. Consider these statements:

Slide Matthew 5:20

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Slide Matthew 5:28

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Slide Matthew 5:44

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Are these standards high enough? Or how about great teachers love their students? Do you think that Jesus loved those who he taught?

Jesus was like that coach Aaron Feis who died while shielding his students from the gunman’s bullets in that high school shooting last week. The Real Jesus, our teacher, lays down his life for us, proving to us that he loves us.

I said that great teachers teach in ways that are memorable. Do you think that the Real Jesus’ teachings are memorable? For those of you who have ever read the Bible or spent time in church, do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son? How about the story of the Good Samaritan? Or the one about the Sower and the Seed? Or Jesus’ statement in Matthew when he said:

Slide Matthew 7:12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

In so many ways, the Real Jesus who we encounter in the Bible has the qualities of other great teachers and coaches and parents and pastors who we have known throughout our lives. But the Real Jesus was a unique teacher and it would be misleading to suggest that in all ways Jesus resembles other great teachers.

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How does the Real Jesus differ from other great teachers?

I want to read to you from John

Slide John 7:14-18

¹⁴Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. ¹⁵The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

¹⁶Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. ¹⁸Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

Let me again read verse 15:

Slide John 7:15

The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

I think the first way that Jesus differs from other great teachers is that:

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The Real Jesus' teaching is wise

The Real Jesus was wiser than anyone who ever lived. What do we mean by wisdom? When we say that Jesus' teaching is wise, what are we talking about?

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Wisdom = skill in living

Wisdom is skill in relating to God and relating to all sorts of people – rich, poor, wise, foolish, young, old, parents, children, men, women, people from your own racial and religious background, people who are Democrats, people who are Republican, people who are independent, people from a different racial and religious background. Wisdom is skill in relating to God and to all sorts of people. And wisdom is skill in relating to every kind of situation – sickness, health, teenage problems, problems of young parents, problems with getting old, poverty, prosperity, difficult children, compliant children, workplace hassles, sexual temptation, marital challenges. Wisdom is skill in relating to God and in relating to people and in relating to life circumstances.

In secular society today, the experts tell us that the answers to life's problems will be found in science. If we devote ourselves to more research and more study, we'll discover the solutions to all the problems we're facing. More research. More investigation. More study. But science can only take us so far. Science can reveal to us the mechanics of how something works, but it can't reveal to us the purpose of that thing. Addressing the mechanics won't ultimately resolve most of the problems we face in contemporary life.

You know when I think of the issue of mechanics, I think of those ads. Viagra or Cialis are shown whenever you watch a football game. There is an epidemic, it seems, of male ED. I watch those ads and I think: I'm sure that the problem that some men are facing is physiological and if a pill can help – praise God! Thank God for medicine. But for many men I wonder if the bigger problem is a loss of Jesus' wise teaching regarding the purpose of sex. Could the need for all of these drugs in America indicate that many men's sexual performance has been affected by the massive use of pornography in our country?

Therapists are reporting that men in their 20's are having sexual problems and need these drugs. When men and women misuse the God-given purpose of sex, they will struggle physically. The purpose of sex was taught by the Real Jesus in his wise teaching in Matthew's gospel:

Slide Matthew 19:4-6

⁴“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Jesus tells us that sex is part and parcel of a whole person unity between a man and a woman – a unity of heart, a unity of mind, a unity of spirit, a unity of body. Sex is a physical sign of a much larger relational unity between a man and woman in marriage. Science can tell us the mechanics of sex, but it can never speak to us about the purpose

of sex. Only the Real Jesus' wise teaching can tell us why we engage in sex to begin with – to complete the unity between a man and a woman.

So, let me ask you a question before we move on. Do you think that Jesus is a wise teacher? Do you think that Jesus has more skill in dealing with life, more insight regarding how life works and how life should work than you do? Do you think that Jesus has more wisdom, more insight, more skill than any of your friends who are giving you counsel about what you want to do with your boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or wife or sex or how you should respond to mistreatment or whatever? Do you think that Jesus knows more than anyone else about how life works, what the wise thing to do would be? Here's the question:

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If you think Jesus' teaching is wise, do you listen to him?

Let's move on:

Slide John 7:15-17

¹⁵The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

¹⁶Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

The Real Jesus' teaching is not only wise:

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The Real Jesus' teaching is authoritative

John tells us that the crowds were amazed because Jesus was able to teach so wisely without formal training. Let's look at verse 15 again:

Slide John 7:15

¹⁵The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

They were astonished that someone who had not been to one of the great rabbinical schools or studied with a famous rabbi could have such a command of scripture, such mastery and depth in his understanding of God and God's will for us. Jesus says his authority did not come through the typical rabbinic chain of one rabbi communicating to a student who then became a rabbi and then communicated to their student. Jesus'

teaching authority was not a matter of receiving an inherited tradition from other people. The Real Jesus derived his authority directly from God.

Here's what we read:

Slide John 7:16

¹⁶Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me.

What would it mean for you to say that Jesus' teaching is authoritative for you? It means bringing your entire life under the teaching of Jesus. To have Jesus' teaching be authoritative in your life, you would bring your mind and your opinions about everything under Jesus. Your opinions about politics. Your opinions about immigrants. Your opinions about divorce. Your opinions about money. Your opinions about giving. Your opinions about what to do when somebody offends you. It is impossible for a person to accept Jesus as their teacher and say regarding something that Jesus taught, "Well, that's fine but I disagree." The reality of our claim to be followers of Jesus is called into question precisely at those points in which we substitute our own opinions for the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus' teaching is not just authoritative over our minds, it's authoritative over our relationships. To be a student of Jesus is to bring all of your relationships under his teaching. It means bringing our marriages under Jesus – whether we marry, who we marry, and how we relate in marriage. It means bringing our child-raising under Jesus. It means bringing our relationship with our parents and our siblings and our friends and our co-workers and other people in the church – our relationships need to come under Jesus. Our vocations, our possessions, what we say and how we say it – all of this must come under Jesus.

Let me share something with you that's a little more personal. I've been the pastor of Vineyard Columbus for the last 30 years. One of the most challenging things for me as a pastor is to speak to someone who claims to be a follower of Jesus about let's say their marriage and a plan to divorce. They come to me and they say, "I'm not happy in my marriage. I haven't been happy for a long time. I'm thinking of getting divorced." I say, "Well, tell me more. Are you being abused?" "No, there's no abuse." "Has there been unfaithfulness?" "No, I don't think so." "Is your spouse cruel to your children or abusive?" "No. They are a good dad or a good mom." I run down the list and then the person says, "We just are unhappy." After offering some ways that the church can come alongside them and offer support to them and offer fresh hope for their marriage as we have for hundreds of couples in their situation. I might say, "Jesus said what God has joined together no man should separate. You aren't free to divorce."

Do you know what the typical response is from someone who claims to be a follower of Jesus? "Well, I guess I just need to pray about it." If I had a dollar for every time someone said to me having heard Jesus' statement, "I guess I'll just pray about it", I'd be

a wealthy man! I want to scream, “What are you going to pray about? Are you going to pray about whether Jesus said it? Are you going to pray about whether his statement applies to you? Are you going to pray about what “not separating” means?”

Here’s the question:

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If you think Jesus’ teaching is authoritative do you obey him?

Jesus gave us a clear test of how to figure out whether his teaching was from God.

Slide John 7:17

Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Let me speak to those of you who struggle with doubt. You wonder if the Real Jesus is who people say he is. Is the Real Jesus truly God come in the flesh? You might say, “You know, I read one article on the internet and it says one thing, but then I read another – I just click to the next article – and it says the opposite. I hear one thing on the Discovery channel about the Real Jesus from some experts and then I go to church and hear something else from the pastor. How can I know who the Real Jesus is?” And Jesus says the best proof of who he is and where his teaching is from is not external. It’s not way out there. The best proof of who Jesus is is internal. He says there’s a self-authenticating way for you to really know who he is and deal with doubts that you have about the Real Jesus. It’s a self-authenticating internal way where you don’t have to listen to everyone else and what their opinions are about him. But the self-authenticating internal way for you to know who Jesus is and where his teaching is from, is to *do his will*.

Again, let’s look at verse 17:

Slide John 7:17

Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

This is precisely what we don’t do. We debate about the meaning of Jesus’ words, we discuss Jesus and his teaching, we read what Jesus says, we think about, we pray about it. Jesus says that the way you’re going to know who I am and where my teaching is from is to do it. Don’t just discuss it. Don’t just debate it or argue about it or read it or think about it or pray about it. Do it.

Let’s say you’re a person who doubts the resurrection of Jesus. You really struggle with believing that Jesus literally rose from the dead. Or you struggle with whether Jesus

really is God come in the flesh. How can you deal with your doubts? Jesus says find something he said that you would agree with, something that you don't doubt and do that one thing.

For example, maybe you agree with Jesus' statement, "Do to others what you would have them do to you." You say, "Yes, that's the way we ought to live. Treat others the way I want to be treated. That's right." Jesus said don't debate it, don't discuss it, do it. Here's what you're going to find.

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1. You don't do it.

You think you should. You think it would be nice if you did do it, but you don't treat people the way you want to be treated.

Here's the second thing:

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1. You don't do it.
2. You can't do it.

If you really lean in and try to treat people exactly the way you want to be treated, you repeatedly mess up. No matter how hard you try, you can't do it. Here's the third thing:

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1. You don't do it.
2. You can't do it.
3. You don't want to do it.

The reason you can't do it is you don't want to do it. There are lots of situations you don't want to give people the benefit of the doubt. You don't want this other person to get ahead of you. In lots of situations it's every person for themselves – and you want to be first. Here's the fourth thing:

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1. You don't do it.
2. You can't do it.
3. You don't want to do it.
4. You want other people to believe that you do it.

You love – and so do I – when people are misled to believe that we're better than we are, kinder than we are, more giving than we are. We are hypocrites – pretending to be better than we are. Now that we see what we are is hypocrites, that we love playing

pretend, we're in the position to consider the Real Jesus, but instead of evaluating Jesus the way we would evaluate any other person on earth – as equals – as if were on the same level as Jesus or worse, standing above Jesus, standing in judgment of Jesus. We must get low. When we learn these things about ourselves, we are reduced and brought to our knees and we see the Real Jesus as he really is – towering above us.

The Real Jesus is the only person who ever did exactly what he said all the time, the only person in history who always treated people the way he wanted to be treated, who put other people before himself all the time is Jesus. It's only when we're on our knees that we're in the position to consider the Real Jesus. We must look up to Jesus to have many of our doubts resolved.

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- The Real Jesus' teaching is wise
- The Real Jesus' teaching is authoritative

And finally,

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The Real Jesus' teaching is self-focused

Jesus said:

Slide John 7:18

Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

Jesus says that not only is his teaching true, but he is true. He, meaning Jesus, is a man of truth. Unlike every other great teacher, the main subject of Jesus' teaching was himself. Other teachers teach you a body of information – about chemistry or history or economics – but the main thing that Jesus taught was about himself.

John Stott who as much as almost anyone who has ever lived has influenced my thinking about Christian faith wrote a wonderful little book that I read while I was in college called *Basic Christianity*

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Book cover

Here's what Stott said in *Basic Christianity*

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“Jesus’ uniqueness was completely unselfconscious. He didn’t need to draw attention to it. It was a fact so obvious to him that it didn’t need emphasizing. It was implied rather than asserted.

- Everyone else was a lost sheep; he had come as a Good Shepherd to seek and to serve them.
- Everyone else was sick with a disease of sin; he was the doctor come to heal them.
- Everyone else was trapped in the darkness of sin and ignorance; he was the light of the world.
- Everyone else was a sinner; he was born to be their Savior and would die for the forgiveness of their sins.
- Everyone else was hungry; he was the bread of life.
- Everyone else was dead in wrongdoing and sin; he could be their life now and their resurrection in the future.

Now, you might say there’s a lot of self-centered people today. We hear about the disease of narcissism all the time in contemporary America. Here’s the difference with the Real Jesus. Stott says [what we find in Jesus is a] combination of the self-centeredness of his teaching and the unself-centeredness of his behavior.

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- In thought, he put himself first; in deed last.
- He exhibited both the greatest self-esteem and the greatest self-sacrifice.
- He knew himself to be Lord of all, but he became the servant.
- He said that he would come one day to judge the world, but he washed the feet of his friends.

Let me ask you a final question.

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If you think Jesus’ teaching was self-focused, do you come to him?

Jesus repeatedly points to himself as the answer to life’s questions. He doesn’t just offer us some abstract principles. He doesn’t just give us a philosophy or a worldview. Whatever our situation, whatever our circumstances, what we need most of all is Jesus, the Real Jesus. Not just a principle, not just an answer. We need the Real Jesus. Jesus said:

Slide Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

And in:

Slide John 5:39-40

³⁹You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Slide John 6:35

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Will you come to him? When you're in need, do you come to him? Have you come to him? Have you responded to Jesus' invitation, "Come to me"?

Jesus our Teacher

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February 24 & 25, 2018
The Real Jesus
John 7:14-24

- I. What makes someone a great teacher?
 - a. Great teachers set high expectations for all students
 - b. Great teachers form strong relationships with their students
 - c. Great teachers are masters of their subject matter
 - d. Great teachers teach in ways that are memorable
- II. How does the Real Jesus resemble other great teachers?
- III. How does the Real Jesus differ from other great teachers?
 - a. The Real Jesus' teaching is wise
If you think Jesus' teaching is wise do you listen to him?
 - b. The Real Jesus' teaching is authoritative
If you think Jesus' teaching is authoritative do you obey him?
 - c. The Real Jesus' teaching is self-focused
If you think Jesus is self-focused do you come to him?