

## LESSON 4

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# A Teachable Attitude

The Great Commission that Jesus gave the church in Matthew 28:18–20 was not only to win souls but also to make disciples. To be a disciple is to be a student. Therefore, as a follower of Jesus Christ, you are to be a life-long student of the master teacher himself. Obviously, a vital prerequisite to being taught is having a teachable attitude.

You may have observed that not everybody is teachable. In fact, some individuals resist instruction and correction. On one occasion Jesus healed a man who was born blind. This act of compassion infuriated a number of the Pharisees who opposed the Lord. They asked the man who had been healed how he received his sight. When he explained how it happened, they would not believe him. So they continued to interrogate him until the man finally exclaimed, “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (John 9:33). The Pharisees angrily answered, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” (John 9:34). What a derogatory response! It demonstrated their refusal to learn or accept facts outside their frame of reference.

As Christians, we must remain open to receiving instruction throughout our lives. It does not matter how many degrees we have earned, how much experience and wisdom we think we have, or how much respect others show us. Each of us has much to learn.

## LESSON OUTLINE

The “School of the Master”  
Instruction through the Word and the Holy Spirit  
A Teachable Attitude Leads to transformation  
Daily Life Lessons  
The Importance of Humility  
Doing the Word

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. *Describe what it means to be enrolled in the “School of the Master.”*
2. *Explain how Jesus teaches through the Word and the Holy Spirit.*
3. *Discuss how being teachable leads to transformation.*
4. *Describe the growth that occurs as we learn daily life lessons.*
5. *State why humility is crucial to having a teachable attitude.*
6. *Explain the importance of practicing what you have learned.*

### The “School of the Master”

#### **Objective 1:**

*Describe what it means to be enrolled in the “School of the Master.”*

Imagine what it would have been like to be one of the disciples who followed Jesus as He journeyed through the towns of Israel, preaching and teaching. These disciples were enrolled in what I call the “School of the Master.” They were with Him twenty-four hours

a day, seven days a week. This was a common method of the Jewish rabbis and their followers during the first century. What an awesome learning model! Can you imagine the lessons they learned?

Jesus was often called “Rabbi.” The word *Rabbi* is of Hebrew origin and means “My Master.” In common usage, the word Rabbi was equated with the word “teacher” (Matthew 23:8). Jesus is undoubtedly the greatest teacher that has ever lived. Even non-Christians admit to His greatness as a teacher, marveling at His message and methodology. His followers were enrolled in an incredible discipleship training school. Jesus did not necessarily choose the best and the brightest pupils, however, as other rabbis of that time did. He picked out an assortment of men—fisherman, a zealot, a tax collector, and others—who had to be willing to learn and apply the lessons.

Today, all Christians automatically are enrolled in the “School of the Master” when they experience spiritual new birth. It is not optional. Remember this—Jesus is always willing to be your Teacher. But you must be teachable: willing to listen, willing to learn, willing to follow instructions, and willing to obey commands. To trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior means to come under His divine Lordship and rule. Therefore, confessing Jesus as your Lord and Savior must include readiness to turn away from anything that displeases Him and eagerness to follow Him wholeheartedly. This leads to personal transformation and fruitful service. What an awesome journey we are on!

## Instruction through the Word and the Holy Spirit

### *Objective 2:*

*Explain how Jesus teaches  
through the Word and the Holy Spirit.*

When Jesus walked on this earth, He saw people with many needs. Mark records that one day when Jesus saw a great multitude “he had compassion on them, because

they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things” (Mark 6:34). Obviously, we do not see Jesus with our physical eyes. So how does He teach us? There are two principal ways.

### Jesus Teaches through the Scripture

Jesus himself taught from the Old Testament Scriptures and shared other truths which were later recorded in what we now call the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. His words were authoritative. To hear His words was to listen to God. He would often say, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Jesus warned of catastrophe for rejecting His words: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matthew 7:26–27). The apostles and their close associates taught the early church based on the Old Testament and Jesus’ words, and their words are recorded in the rest of the New Testament.

Today we have the whole Bible, God’s complete written revelation for humankind. It is clear, authoritative, and self-interpreting. You do not need to be a seminary-trained theologian to understand the Bible. It contains the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the sayings and teachings of Jesus Christ, and the writings of the apostles. The Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). As a disciple you must read, study, and respond to what is written in the Bible.

Jesus spoke of the life-giving power of the Word of God when He said, ““Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”” (Matthew 4:4). In other words, the Word of God provides spiritual nourishment. God is always speaking through His Word, revealing His will, thoughts, promises and plans for us.

Sadly, many Christians, after an initial period of great enthusiasm and hunger for truth in the Bible, slack off in

their daily Bible reading. Instead of scouring God's Word for truth, help, guidance, and principles for living, they fall back on their own worldly wisdom and experience. In essence, they demonstrate an unteachable attitude. Such self-reliance is no different than turning their backs on Jesus if He were physically present.

Having a teachable attitude means having a hunger to know God better through His Word. Every day you should pray over the Word of God and ask the Lord to speak to you as you spend time in the Word. He will indeed teach you many things, but you must put into practice what you learn.

### Jesus Teaches through the Spirit

Not only does the Lord teach through His Word, He also teaches you through the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised this in John 14:25–26, when He told the disciples, “All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, 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.”

The Holy Spirit teaches God's people in many ways. The Holy Spirit can teach you by speaking to your heart through the Word of God. To say the Holy Spirit speaks through the Bible means that He can cause a passage of Scripture to enlighten you suddenly. The Spirit speaks to your personal needs and situations as He brings the Word of God to life.

The Holy Spirit can also speak to you through the quiet nudging of His presence within you, as He urges you to do something. Perhaps He would urge you to visit a particular friend. When you get there you discover that your friend is facing a need, and you are able to minister to that need. In the book of Acts, the Spirit told Philip to go up to a chariot that was traveling on the road. There he met the owner of the chariot and was able to lead him to Christ (see Acts 8:26–39). This is a wonderful biblical example of the Holy Spirit's activity in a believer.

When you receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and continue in the Spirit-filled life, you will have increased sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. It is important to remain teachable and open, so that the Holy Spirit can guide you. The Holy Spirit may prompt you to pray for someone who needs physical healing. He may prompt you to give a word of prophecy or tongues and interpretation in church. He may also give you a word of knowledge or word of wisdom to share in a time of need.

## A Teachable Attitude Leads to Transformation

### *Objective 3:*

*Discuss how being teachable leads to transformation.*

Jesus' goal for His disciples was for them to become Christlike. Jesus presented this goal in Luke 6:40, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." The Lord does not just wish to impart knowledge to us, but to transform us until we resemble Him.

### Our Role in the Transformation

Some people mistakenly think that to become a Christian is to become a mindless religious zombie who carries out the bizarre wishes of some invisible guiding influence. Nothing could be farther from reality. The truth is that God wants to transform us, but He does not do so against our will! One of God's highest priorities in creating human beings is that they would be able to exercise significant choice or free will. From the beginning of human history, God has desired for people to know and love Him. However, true love cannot be forced but must be offered freely. God graciously gave humans intelligence, consciousness, the right of self-determination, and choice. Often we have used this free will to turn away from our Creator, but the option is always there for us to choose to love and submit to God's plans and purposes.

God will work in transforming power in our lives only as we participate in becoming Christlike. We face daily choices

as to whether we will allow the life of Christ to be expressed through us or whether the self-life will be manifested. The self-life includes our natural tendency toward selfishness, greed, pride, anger, and other sins. We must decide daily to grow and involve Christ in all areas of our lives. As we respond willingly to the instruction of Jesus through the Word of God and the guidance of His Holy Spirit, we are transformed, becoming more like our Teacher.

### Jesus' Role in Our Transformation

The part that Jesus plays in our transformation is indispensable. He comes to live His life in us! No matter how hard we try, we cannot become Christlike on our own. Only as we rely on the life of Christ is He able to live through us. Regarding his dependence on the life of Christ, note what Paul says in Philippians 4:13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." "I can do everything"—that is our part. But it can only be done through Christ who gives strength—that is His greater part.

Jesus' power and energy are released in your life as you daily submit to Him. The longer you humbly walk with Christ, the more you discover His involvement and empowerment in every area of your life. This includes your prayers, knowledge and wisdom, commitment, skills, gifts, sanctification, witness, and service to others. Paul expresses this great secret of the Christian life: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

### A Common Error

Some believers have focused almost completely on using their gifts and talents for the Lord, but they have neglected dealing with serious flaws in their character. Such individuals may be busy "serving the Lord" and may even have acquired a reputation of importance, but they tolerate sins such as greed, poor stewardship, lying, unforgiveness, immoral sexual activity, unkindness, pride, or selfishness. However, to glorify God and be a positive influence to others—both in and outside the family of God—we must be transformed. A key passage to learn

is Romans 8:28–29, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

## Daily Life Lessons

### *Objective 4:*

*Describe the growth that occurs as we learn daily life lessons.*

The disciples of Jesus learned many life lessons as they followed the Master each day. Jesus used the daily events of life as teaching points and object lessons. As we understand this, all of life becomes our classroom in the “School of the Master.”

### A Child and a Servant

To illustrate, when the disciples were arguing among themselves about who was the greatest—thus revealing their spiritual immaturity—Jesus brought a child and placed him before the disciples. Jesus then taught, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest” (Luke 9:48).

Jesus taught another powerful lesson when He washed the feet of the disciples after the Last Supper. After He had washed their feet, Jesus asked, “Do you understand what I have done for you? . . . You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:12–15). Through this act, Christ demonstrated true servanthood.

### Eagerness to Learn

Jesus taught many life lessons to the disciples, and He is still doing that today with us. He uses the

situations we encounter in our daily routine as well as new experiences to teach us how to represent the kingdom of God. For instance, you may encounter a young woman who is difficult to love. Perhaps she is argumentative, offensive, and angry. But, as you learn more about her, you discover that pain and hurt have colored her outlook on life. Eventually she confesses that she was abused as a child or experienced the tragic loss of a loved one. Suddenly, this insight helps you to be compassionate with her and with others. This is a most valuable and practical lesson to learn in God's kingdom.

Jesus reached out to people that the Pharisees despised. If you are teachable, the Holy Spirit will show you the real needs of people, and He will open doors for you to minister to them. Daily, ask the Lord what He is trying to teach you through your situations. Then respond to what the Lord is showing you. You and I have opportunities to grow every day.

### Learning from Mistakes

We fail at times, just as the disciples of Jesus did. If you stumble, it is important to get back on your feet and move closer to Christ! He is very willing to forgive and restore you. Yes, you can learn from your mistakes. That is part of being a teachable disciple. However, it is even better to learn from the Scriptures and avoid the pitfalls and traps that others have fallen into.

## The Importance of Humility

### *Objective 5:*

*State why humility is crucial to having a teachable attitude.*

God knows much more than you or I do. While this may be obvious, it leads us to consider a very important quality that we must have in order to be teachable: humility. Humility leads you to acknowledge that God truly does know much more than you do, and that you are dependent on Him for divine guidance, wisdom,

and instruction. Rather than being a limitation, humility opens you up to the vast wisdom of God.

Psalms 25:9 says of the Lord, “He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.” As you walk humbly with God, He will teach and guide you, no matter what the situation. Proverbs 3:5–6 also gives us this assurance: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” In every situation God has a living lesson to teach you; humility acknowledges God’s authority to guide you in the right path. God can guide you through His Word, through the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, through circumstances, and through the counsel of godly people. But you must remain teachable.

### Humility in Regard to People

You can always learn from people, even people who are difficult to love, or who are very different from you. A great attitude to have when you encounter difficult people is “Lord, what would you have me learn from this?” God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

Moses was the meekest man on the earth in his lifetime (Numbers 12:3) and because of his meekness, God gave him much grace as he faced the challenges of leading God’s people. Moses knew his need of God’s help: that is undoubtedly one reason he spent so much time in prayer and communion with God. As you rely on the Lord and remain teachable, He will give you wisdom and grace daily.

## Doing the Word

### *Objective 6:*

*Explain the importance of practicing what you have learned.*

Jesus gave assignments to His disciples and expected them to do what He asked of them. Someone who is truly teachable will respond to the Word of God by putting it into effect. This will lead to transformation through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Responding to the Word of God often includes believing a divine promise and doing something tangible. For example, Mark 16:17–18 says, ““These signs will accompany those who believe: . . . they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”” Putting this text into practice means that you lay hands on the sick (provided they are willing, of course) and pray the prayer of faith, believing that they shall be healed. As you put this Scripture into action, God will work.

The same principle of obedience is applied to other areas of our lives, including our giving. Malachi 3:10 states, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.” A teachable disciple will bring his or her tithe to the local church, trusting that God will open the windows of heaven and pour out His blessing.

The instruction to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12) simply suggests that we treat others as we would want to be treated. Jesus said, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). In the matter of good works, the Lord gives assignments to each of His people. He has prepared good works ahead of time, for us to walk in. Jesus gave assignments to His disciples so that they would learn by doing, and He is still doing that today!

When Jesus said ““go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation”” (Mark 16:15), He was counting on His teachable disciples to put this Great Commission into action. But He also promised the baptism and anointing of the Holy Spirit, to empower them to spread the Good News. The disciples would not be going alone!

### Discipling Others

God teaches us through His Word, but He also teaches us through people who disciple us. The command to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) means to teach people to obey and follow the Word of the Lord.

Disciples are meant to reproduce. This process of reproduction is brought out in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." As you are teachable, the Lord will strengthen and establish you in His Word. Then He asks you to help disciple others also. The teachable disciple who puts God's Word into effect becomes a good example to teach others also. This is reproduction: disciples teaching faithful people, who can then disciple others.

Making disciples includes many aspects of ministry: Sunday School teachers teaching a class; small group leaders leading a Bible study, one-on-one discipleship programs, sharing Christ with your neighbors, and preaching and teaching the Word of God in various settings. Each of these is a precious opportunity to make disciples.

Teaching and making disciples also includes parents teaching their children, by bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Parents have a precious opportunity to teach their children by their words and example. Discipleship begins in the home, and parents play a crucial role in discipling their children.

As you become like Christ, you will experience more compassion for the lost. Jesus stated His mission: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). As Jesus looked out on the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. "So He began teaching them many things" (Mark 6:34). This great motivation of love and compassion will move you to go and disciple others also.

Having a teachable attitude is vital if you are to become fruitful as a disciple of Jesus Christ. God's goal for you is nothing less than transformation. And this wonderful change will last throughout eternity!

**SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE VERSES TO MEMORIZE**

Psalm 25:9

Matthew 4:4

Matthew 28:18–20

Mark 6:34

Luke 6:40

John 14:25–26

Romans 8:28–29

Philippians 4:13

2 Timothy 2:2

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

- Enrollment in the "School of the Master" is for*
  - those who are going into the ministry.*
  - those who want further training.*
  - every believer.*
- The goal of Jesus' discipleship training is to*
  - train believers in the art of getting along with other people.*
  - transform believers until they resemble Jesus Christ.*
  - help believers become skillful debaters.*
- The apostles' teaching to the early church was based on*
  - ancient philosophy.*
  - the Old Testament and Jesus' words.*
  - their wisdom gained through daily experience.*
- Responding to the Word of God includes two important dimensions:*
  - thinking and walking.*
  - trying and waiting.*
  - believing and doing.*
- The Christlike character is*
  - only for a few people.*
  - foundational for every believer.*
  - impossible to attain.*
- Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet*
  - showed His servanthood.*
  - encouraged the disciples to be lazy.*
  - set a bad example for other leaders.*
- Humility is important in our being teachable because humility*
  - makes us smarter than other people.*
  - is the queen of the virtues.*
  - makes us dependent on God.*

8. *The word Rabbi commonly means*
  - a) *teacher.*
  - b) *healer.*
  - c) *disciple.*
9. *According to Luke 6:40, which is true of the relationship between the student and the teacher?*
  - a) *The student will never become like the teacher.*
  - b) *The student is not above the teacher.*
  - c) *The student has no need of the teacher.*
10. *Jesus taught that to become great in the kingdom of God, you must*
  - a) *grow up and be a responsible adult.*
  - b) *have wealth and power.*
  - c) *be a servant.*

## ANSWERS TO STUDY QUESTIONS

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parenthesis.

1. *c* (4.1)
2. *b* (4.3)
3. *b* (4.2)
4. *c* (4.6)
5. *b* (4.3)
6. *a* (4.4)
7. *c* (4.5)
8. *a* (4.1)
9. *b* (4.3)
10. *c* (4.4)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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