

LESSON 2 Importance of Christian Teaching

In Lesson 1 we studied about Christian teaching as a ministry. We discussed the difference between teaching, preaching, and testifying. We also learned that Jesus commanded us to teach. He gave us a textbook, a Helper, and an audience.

In this lesson we will look at the history of teaching in the Bible. Teaching was important in the lives of the people in the Old Testament, and the ministry of teaching continued through the New Testament. As much as people in Bible times, we today need to be taught the Word of God. In a world of sinful hearts, our only hope is to hear God's message. By learning this message we can be examples to others.

The Plan

- A. Teachers of the Law
- B. Teachers of God's Ways
- C. The Great Teacher
- D. Teachers of the Word

The Goals

1. State why the teaching of the Law was important to Israel.
2. Discuss the effects of Israel's disobedience of God's laws.
3. Describe how Jesus, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples.
4. Explain the importance of teaching in the times of the apostles.

A. TEACHERS OF THE LAW

Goal 1. State why the teaching of the Law was important to Israel.

Teaching Was Commanded

God taught such individuals as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. Spiritual teaching of broader groups of people started with God's chosen people, Israel. Israel was to be different from the nations living around them because God told Israel, "I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations" (Leviticus 20:24).

As with us all, Israel needed to know how they should live. No one can live without some rules or laws, for rules help us know what to do and what not to do. In part, God has put in our heart some of His rules.

God gave Israel the laws they would need to please Him. Read Exodus 24:12 to remember what God told Moses. Notice what God said was the reason for the laws: instruction, or

teaching, of the people. Moses was to teach the laws to the people.

Moses obeyed God. In Deuteronomy 4:1, he told the people,

“Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.”

The people were to obey the commands of God that Moses had given them. They were not to add anything to these laws or take anything away from them. The people were to teach these laws to their children. The knowledge of God’s laws would be passed on to each generation in this way. Abraham passed the knowledge of God to his son Isaac, but Moses was teaching a nation. They did not have the close example of Abraham’s personal experience in following God.

Moses told the people in Deuteronomy 6:1, ““These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe.”” Moses began the spiritual teaching ministry in the Old Testament when he obeyed that command. That ministry continues today. As you study the Old Testament you will learn these truths that God taught Israel through Moses.

Teaching Was Blessed

God blessed the nation of Israel when the priests followed Moses’ example. The people saw how to live clean and healthy lives by some laws. They could see how to bring sacrifices for their sins, how to worship God, and how to treat each other in other laws. These things were important to their happiness. Moses told the people that if they obeyed the Law, the other nations would know they were wise. In Deuteronomy 4:7–8, Moses said:

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And

what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

When Jehoshaphat became king of Judah, he tried to stop idol worship. (Read 2 Chronicles 17:7–9.) Would you try to get people to worship the true God by reading the Bible to them? Those men taught God’s law to the people in Judah, and the fear of the Lord fell upon the nations around them. Instead of making war on Jehoshaphat, the other nations brought him gifts.

God had kept His promise. When His people taught and obeyed His laws, God blessed them. He kept them in their own land and protected them against their enemies.

Application

1 Read 2 Chronicles 17:7–9 and answer the following.

a) Where did Jehoshaphat send a group of men?

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b) What did they do when they got there?

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B. TEACHERS OF GOD’S WAYS

Goal 2. Discuss the effects of Israel’s disobedience of God’s laws.

Teaching Was Needed

The need for teaching in the nation of Israel was very great. People at that time were the same as today. It is hard to do the right thing all the time. We may want to do what is right, but we still give in to the wrong things. We are weak when we want to be strong.

Samuel knew this was true of the people of Israel. He had been their judge and prophet for many years. The people decided they wanted to be like the other nations by having a king to rule over them. Samuel did not want to do it because God was their king. But God led Samuel to make Saul the king.

Samuel knew the Israel needed more teaching to live as God wanted them to live. After Saul was made king, Samuel told the people, “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right” (1 Samuel 12:23).

Learning God’s laws will help us not to sin against Him. David confesses, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).

Teaching Was Rejected

The people of Israel did not always obey God. At times, they rejected God’s laws and did not listen to the priests who taught the Law. God could not bless them when they were disobedient.

One who rejected God’s law was Joash. When he became king of Judah, “Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him” (2 Kings 12:2). But he did not continue to obey those instructions after the priest died. Read 2 Chronicles 24:17–22 and notice the change in Joash. Why did he allow the people to stop worshipping God and encouraged them to turn to idols? What did God do?

Joash listened to the people instead of to the priests who taught God’s laws. Because God loved the people, God sent prophets to warn them. But Joash and the people killed the priest. In response, God punished Joash and the people because they sinned. Joash was killed after God allowed the nation to be defeated in battle.

It is very important to obey the teaching of God’s Word. We need to know His Word if we want to live, as He wants us to live. If we reject His Word, we will lose His blessing.

Application

- 2** Circle the letter in front of each true statement.
 - a)** Samuel wanted Israel to have a king.
 - b)** Samuel did not think Israel needed any more teaching.
 - c)** Teaching God’s Word helps to keep us from sinning against God.
 - d)** Israel always listened to the priests teach the Law.
 - e)** Joash was killed because he rejected God’s law.

 - 3** If we want to live as God wants us to, it will be important to
 - a)** live by the Law.
 - b)** listen to the teaching of God’s Word.
 - c)** do what others are doing.
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C. THE GREAT TEACHER

Goal 3. Describe how Jesus, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples.

Teaching Was Planned

Jesus thought of himself as a teacher, always willing to teach in the synagogues (Jewish churches) and in many other places. All four Gospels tell us that Jesus taught.

Application

- 4** Read Matthew 4:23, Mark 6:2, Luke 6:6, and John 7:14, then answer these questions.
 - a)** Where do these verses say Jesus taught?
.....
 - b)** Why do you think all four Gospels told this fact about Jesus?
.....
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Jesus told His disciples that He was a teacher. In His last conversation with them before His death, He said, “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am” (John 13:13).

Jesus also allowed others to call Him *Teacher*. For instance, Nicodemus approached Jesus one night and said to Him, “‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God’” (John 3:2). Jesus responded, “‘I tell you the truth . . .’” (John 3:3). Jesus was telling Nicodemus that, as a teacher, He spoke the truth.

In Jesus’ ministry, He gave high honor to teaching. Jesus planned to teach. One day when Jesus was talking with the Jews, He said, “‘He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world’” (John 8:26). Jesus was saying His words came from His Father. He was obeying God’s plan to teach.

The people who heard Jesus teach knew there was something different about His teaching. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew writes, “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:28–29).

The way He taught and lived showed that Jesus thought of himself as a teacher. Yet, He is more than a teacher. He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world! Since teaching was that important to the Savior of the world, it must be important to you and me. He is our example.

Teachers Were Taught

The 12 men who followed Jesus were called *disciples*. A disciple is a learner. The disciples learned from Jesus as they walked the dusty roads of Palestine. They learned as they watched Him perform miracles. They listened as He spoke to the large crowds that followed. Whenever Jesus taught, the disciples were there, learning His message and His methods.

Jesus’ ministry to these disciples was mostly a teaching ministry. After Jesus performed a miracle, or after He ministered to the crowds by telling a story, He took the disciples off to a place where they could talk quietly.

One day Jesus healed a young boy who had had an evil spirit. When Jesus and the disciples were alone, the disciples asked Him why they could not drive the spirit out. Jesus replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer” (Mark 9:29). Jesus used His disciples’ questions as an opportunity to teach them.

Mark tells us, “They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples” (Mark 9:30–31). Jesus knew how important it was to teach people. In a short time He was going to leave them the work He was doing. When He left, Jesus told His disciples to teach others. Those believers were also called disciples (Read Acts 6:1–2, 7).

This is the way the gospel message has come down to us. One person has passed God’s Word on to others through teaching. It is now our turn to teach others. But before we can teach another person, we have to become learners.

We have God’s Word, the Bible, to learn from. We also have pastors and teachers in the church to teach us. As you learn more about the value of teaching, learn as much as you can from the Bible and from your pastor.

Application

- 5** List three reasons why Jesus was known as a teacher.
- a)**
- b)**
- c)**

- 6** Circle the letter before each true statement below.
- a)** The twelve men that followed Jesus were called disciples.
 - b)** As disciples they learned His message and methods.
 - c)** Being a disciple means being a preacher.
 - d)** We need to become disciples.
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D. TEACHERS OF THE WORD

Goal 4. Explain the importance of teaching in the times of the apostles.

Teaching Was Continued

The apostles believed Jesus and accepted His command to teach. They followed His example. The church in the book of Acts became a teaching church because they did this.

Although Jewish religious leaders had the apostles whipped, telling them to never again speak about Jesus, still the apostles taught. Luke writes, “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42).

Paul started many churches and had a teaching ministry. Paul, with Barnabas, stayed for a year in Antioch to teach the church. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the people the Word of God. He also taught both in their homes and in public, as he lived three years in Ephesus.

The early church may have started with preaching, but it was built on teaching. The apostles knew it was important for the new converts to learn about Jesus and His commands.

Teaching Was Rewarded

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “In the church God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, and in the third place teachers” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Application

7 Read Ephesians 4:11–12 and answer the following questions.

a) Is teaching listed among the different ministries?

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b) Who does Paul say has a teaching ministry?

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c) Why are these ministries given?

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Teaching is listed with pastors in this Scripture. Your pastor is your teacher. That is how God planned it. God will bless you as you learn from your pastor.

Teaching is rewarding. It results in strong churches with Christians who know and understand the Word of God. Christians like that build up the church. In the book of Acts the number of Christians grew as the apostles continued to preach and teach about Jesus. More people became Christians when they heard the Word of God taught.

Do you want your church to grow? Do you want friends and relatives to become Christians? Teaching the Word of God will help make this happen. God’s Word leads people to Jesus. That is the greatest thing we can do for others.

Application

8 Circle the letter in front of each true statement.

a) The apostles continued to teach after Jesus returned to heaven.

b) The apostles stopped teaching when they were whipped and told to stop.

c) Paul preached only in the churches he started.

d) God gave the teaching ministry to the church.

e) Pastors should not teach.

9 How can God's plan for the teaching ministry affect your life?

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Check Your Answers

- 9** We need to learn from Christian teachers; then we must teach others.
- 1 a)** Jehoshaphat sent the men to the towns of Judah.
b) When they got there, the men taught the Laws of God.
- 8 a)** and **d)** are true.
- 2 a)** False
b) False
c) True
d) False
e) True
- 7 a)** Yes
b) Everyone
c) For the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body
- 3 b)** listen to the teaching of God's Word.
- 6** All but **c)** are true.
- 4 a)** In the synagogue
b) To show how important teaching was to Jesus
- 5 a)** He taught in the synagogues.
b) He said He was a teacher.
c) He taught with authority.