

What Makes a Great Teacher?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday July 20, 2008
John 13:1-8, 12-20

“You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are right, for that is what I am” (John 13:13—NRSV).

“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (John 13:13—KJV).

By the time Jesus celebrated His last Passover with His disciples, they had learned to call Him “Teacher and Lord.” They first came to recognize His teaching was with an authority far greater than any political or religious leader they had ever heard before. As they watched Him heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, and foretell the future accurately, they came to identify Him as Lord over all. By personal observation they witnessed the actions and words of Jesus Christ, and they came to know Him as “God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart” (John 1:18).

Today, how would you expect a great teacher who was also rich and powerful to act? Jesus approached life and people differently from what we (and those of His day) might expect of others or ourselves.

First, Jesus put His titles in the right order: He declared himself both “Lord and Teacher” (John 13:14). As Lord, Jesus lived and taught according to the truth. As their Lord, Jesus expected His followers to act and teach truthfully too. He told His disciples, “I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

Second, as Lord and Teacher, Jesus knelt and washed His disciples’ feet. Lowly slaves might do this for their masters.

Third, Jesus always loved deeply in actions and words, telling His disciples, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Happily, Jesus also promised them and us, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17). — Copyright 2008 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought or Class Discussion

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Think about your answers to the questions below before your Sunday school class meets, discuss in class, or use for further study. In some cases, I do not always write the questions to have a definitive right or wrong answer. In most cases, the questions should encourage everyone to think about how to apply biblical truths to their daily lives. Before beginning to answer the questions below, read the entire Scripture lesson in your favorite translation or compare translations. Write your thoughts in the space provided and take them to your Sunday school class for discussion.

1. In what way did Jesus agree with what His disciples said about Him and in what way did He correct them or improve their understanding of Him? How can we follow His example in our own teaching?
2. Can you think of a teacher (perhaps one you had or have) who was also a master? What qualities did he have that made him both a master and teacher? Was he a “master craftsman” or a “master of music” or had he “mastered his subject”? Why do we have a Masters Degree in academia?
3. In what ways was Jesus similar to your best teacher or the best master you know? In what ways was your best teacher or master different from Jesus?
4. In what ways can master teachers be of greater value to their students than ordinary teachers might be?
5. Describe the difference between a teacher who loves and serves and a teacher who does not. Why do you think we will be blessed if we act as Jesus taught? How will others be blessed by our acting as He taught?

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