

Teaching Like a Disciple

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

What does it mean to teach like a disciple? To answer this question, we have to first look at the way Jesus taught. One lesson we can learn from Jesus is that he knew how important it was to have relationships with his students. What we can take from that is in order to be effective in our classrooms it is vital to have relationships with our students otherwise it will not matter what we teach. You can see the importance of this when Jesus meets Mary Magdalen outside of the tomb. Mary was despondent and heartbroken, and we know from the Bible that Jesus mattered to her. That's not really a shock to us as Christians, what does shock us as sinners is how much we and Mary matter to him. He had just saved humanity from sin, the most important act in all of history and yet Jesus took the time to assure her and show her just how much she mattered to him. In doing this Jesus teaches us another lesson, that valuing the individual is important.

Jesus never focused on the weaknesses of his students, he focused on their strengths and used them to guide how he delivered his messages. You could say that Jesus was the first to differentiate. He used many different methods of teaching, stories, parables, questions, discussion, lecture, object lessons, and debates to communicate His message depending on his audience. Jesus adapted His teaching to fit the specific situation. We can see this in Matthew 5, Jesus was lecturing to the crowds on the mountainside. However, in John 13:5 we can see that when He was alone with the disciples, He used object lessons, such as the washing of their feet to demonstrate servant leadership. Jesus also matched His teaching method with the message He needed to communicate. In His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, He used questioning to lead her to truth of His message (John 4:7–30). Jesus used the Lord's Supper, His final lesson as a way to help the disciples visualize His Teaching. (Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:17–20). Jesus led His students in moving from concrete experiences to abstract principles. He did this by using stories to connect common life events to spiritual truths. In the

story of the Good Samaritan, He taught what it meant to be a good neighbor (Luke 10:30–37). In the Parable of the Sower, He demonstrated how the kingdom of God would develop (Matthew 13:3–23).

Another lesson we can take from Jesus is that the mission is to transform lives rather than to impart information. He did this by using mentoring assignments to teach His disciples how to share their faith (Luke 10:1–20). Though his work was the most important work of all time, Jesus never became anxious about trying to cover too much information in His short 3-year ministry. As teachers we have to avoid the temptation of focusing only on how much we can cram into a student's head and then having them regurgitate that onto a piece of paper. Jesus understood that receiving information was not as important as seeing lives changed (see John 16:12–13). Jesus was concerned with the needs of His learners. He understood their culture, their traditions, and their needs. All of those things were taken into consideration in His teaching. As Christian teachers we are called to teach the Gospel, in order to teach like a disciple, we must not take a one size fits all approach in our ministry.

Teaching is one of the most demanding professions we can choose, but also one of the most rewarding. We are called by God to instruct and encourage students in the ways He has called them to live. Because you never know when you might have a Mary Magdalene, a Peter, a Martha, a rich young ruler, or even a Saul sitting in front of you. You also cannot find a better guide than the Master Teacher himself.

Let's pray: Jesus you truly are the Master Teacher, please guide us in being able to focus on the needs of our students and continue to help us to teach like disciples.

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