

1. The Scribe's Method of Instruction or the Pattern of Jesus for Developing People

In our last three topics, we talked about the difference between the Greek style of teaching and the Hebrew style of teaching. We saw that the Greek style of instruction was primarily classroom instruction. In contrast, the Hebrew style of instruction was to show people by example. The scribes had adopted the Greek style of instruction. Christ shows us the contrast between the way He taught and the way the scribes taught to show the difference between the two styles of teaching. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Matthew 23:1-4, we read, “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. “For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.” In these verses, we see several things the scribes did as a part of their teaching.

First, we see that the scribes spoke to the people and taught them the law that had been given by God to Moses. Christ told both the multitudes and His disciples to listen to the scribes and do what they taught when they taught the Word of God. Here, we see that people can teach the Word of God, even when they are not following Christ. Many false teachers teach certain things from the Bible, even though they are not Christians. As Peter spoke about Paul, in 2 Peter 3:16, he said, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.” Those who do not know Christ can teach the Bible, but they may twist it to satisfy themselves.

Second, Christ pointed out that the scribes did not do what they were teaching. Instead of letting the Word of God transform their own lives, the scribes were just telling what Moses had written. They did not even try to understand or apply to their own lives the things they were teaching. Of course, that meant that they did not put their trust in Christ. However, it also meant that they could not lead people to develop godly lives by their example, because their lives were an example of hypocrisy. The scribes, and the Pharisees, were practicing this hypocrisy. Christ said about them in Matthew 15:14, “Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” They did not know where they were going, so it was impossible for them to lead others in the right way.

Christ said the scribes and Pharisees were headed toward destruction, and they were leading others to destruction. Matthew 23:27-28 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Here, Christ makes it clear that they were spiritually dead and full of sin. They did things to try to deceive people, so that people would think that they were righteous. However, they were actually practicing hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Third, we see that the scribes were putting heavy burdens on the people. However, they would not even lift a finger to try to help carry any of these burdens. Here, we see that the scribes were using the law to produce guilt in the lives of the people by adding their own rules. In fact, the Pharisees had added six hundred and thirteen rules. These rules included rules about the proper way for the people to wash their hands and many similar rules. One day, Christ had dinner with a Pharisee, but did not follow the rule of the Pharisees. The Pharisee was very surprised that Christ would not follow the rules of the Pharisees. Christ's answer is found in Luke 11:39. "Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.'" Christ pointed out that the religious leaders were depending on outward actions, but had no inner change of heart.

Christ shared with these religious teachers that true teaching should produce a changed life so that the teachers could lead by their own example. In Matthew 23:23, Christ told them, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." Christ made it clear that the religious leaders were not obeying the very laws they were teaching. He said in several passages that they were actually bringing judgment on themselves. They were actually driving people with fear, instead of leading them with love.

Christ also explained why the scribes even taught the law. Matthew 23:5-7 says, "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 'greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'"" These verses make it clear that their purpose was not to bring glory to God. Instead, their purpose was to focus attention on themselves.

In contrast, Christ worked to develop the disciples and help them grow and become godly spiritual leaders. Christ developed the disciples by taking them with Him. In Matthew 4:16-21, Christ told Peter, Andrew, James and John, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then Matthew 4:22-23 says, "And immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." Here, we see that Christ knew that the lives of the disciples would be transformed as they followed Him.

First, Christ showed the disciples how to learn to understand and apply the Word of God. Matthew 7:28-29 says, "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Here, we see that Christ taught in a totally different way than the scribes. The Word of God has its own authority. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the Word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word will reveal to people the very intents that are within their own hearts.

Second, Christ showed the disciples how to apply the Word of God to their own lives so that their

lives were being transformed. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” As the Word of God was transforming their minds, they were growing in godly character. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Even the scribes and other religious leaders that had rejected Christ had to recognize that the character of these men had been transformed by being with Christ.

Third, Christ showed the disciples how to effectively share the Word of God with others by depending on the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Here, we see that the disciples had grown in ministry skills because they had learned to depend on the Holy Spirit, instead of depending on their own strength.

The development process Christ used to develop the disciples was totally different than the teaching of the scribes. The disciples learned the Word of God, and also learned that the Word is living and powerful. The disciples grew in godly character. The disciples grew in ministry skills, as they learned to depend on the Holy Spirit. Their lives and their ministries were transformed.

Their transformed lives resulted in two accusations being brought against the early Christians. Acts 5:28 says, “‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’” The scribes and other religious leaders realized that the lives and teachings of the disciples had radically changed the city of Jerusalem. Acts 17:6 says, “But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’” Here, we see that their ministry did not stop in Jerusalem but continued to spread.

How do you teach in your life and through your life? Do you teach like the scribes and just give people knowledge that does not change your life or theirs, or do you follow the pattern of Christ and show others by your example how the Word of God has changed your thinking, has changed and developed godly character in your life, and has equipped you to serve the Lord effectively? The answers that you give to these questions will determine whether you are able to develop godly spiritual leaders. May the Lord richly bless you as you make it your goal to develop godly reproducing leaders, as you show them, by your example, how to grow in their knowledge of the Word of God, how to grow in godly character, and how to grow in effective ministry.