

Our Master Teacher!

April 30th, 2017

I've spent a few days up in Maine back in January teaching at the Heroic Leadership Institute,

- Which is one of the Vineyard's schools of ministry for young adults.
- It's basically a 9-month program that covers things like the supernatural life, missionary life, and contemplative life in a context of amazing community.
- It was great being able to spend that time with such an amazing group of young people... so eager to grow and learn!

Not really knowing what to call me, one of the students there called me "Teacher Craig," which cracked me up a bit.

- But hearing that got me thinking about my Teacher... about our Master Teacher, Jesus!
- Just **think about your favorite teacher** growing up... and then think about what makes that teacher great.

They're probably **humble**... able to **speak simply** because they're not trying to impress you with their knowledge.

- Great teachers are **patient**...they're **kind & show respect**... they have **great enthusiasm** for what they're sharing.
- Great teachers are really **good at "show-n-tell"**, not just explaining a concept but demonstrating it as well.

Great teachers **understand that real learning often follows mistakes**, and so encourage risk-taking.

- Great teachers **engage their students**... they **remain positive**... they **inspire more out of us** than we thought we had.
- Well, Jesus was all of that... and SO much more!!

In fact, when Jesus taught, **crowds flocked to Him** in such great numbers, that one time **He had to get into a boat** just so everybody would be able to see and hear Him.

- Vertically challenged **people like Zacchaeus**, would climb trees just to be able to see Him.
- There was a **sick guy whose friends cut a hole through a roof**

and lowered him down on a mat just so he could get near Him.

People gave up careers, gave up money, and gave up reputations just to **walk with Him** as His followers.

- His teaching was so life changing that, after Jesus was resurrected, we're told in Acts 2,
- that His followers **not only devoted themselves** to what He taught **but began teaching those same things** to others.

Of course, it was that teaching that got Jesus crucified... and it was that teaching that gets them in big trouble with religious authorities as well.

- So, the **Sanhedrin, the intellectual elite of their day**, bring a couple of disciples/fishermen, Peter and John, in for questioning.
- This would be **like the faculty of MIT** bringing in **two parking lot attendants** to quiz them on quantum mechanics.

But not only do Peter and John fail to be intimidated by them, we told that these fishermen **reduce their inquisitors** to silence.

- **Acts 4:13** says, *"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."*

Of course, it's not just the ordinary, unschooled men who are taken by this incredible teacher. Paul also becomes a follower of Jesus.

- Now Paul, by all accounts, is one of the more brilliant people of his day.
- In fact, he's in **most every top 5 list** of history's most influential people...
- A highly-educated man who studied under one of the greatest rabbinic scholars in history, a guy by the name of Gamaliel.

But, when it comes to Jesus, Paul says that **"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"** (Colossians 2:3)

- Paul didn't say that about Gamaliel. He didn't say that about himself. He said that about Jesus.
- Now really smart people **don't apply to a program** to study under someone less smart than they.

- You see, **Paul recognizes Jesus** as the **Master of the intellect**, above him in every way.

That's one of the amazing aspects of Jesus the Teacher. The **simplest person** in the world can understand Him...

- while the **smartest person** in the world, could spend a lifetime **trying understand the depths** of nearly anything He had to say.
- As a matter of historical record, **no thinker has ever come anywhere close to the impact** of this Man, Jesus. *For example:*

The Book of His life & teaching, the Gospels, have impacted the world so much that they have been translated into **1,442** languages!

- We sort of take that for granted. One of the best-selling novels of all time is *Don Quixote*. Its' been translated into about **60** languages.
- According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the Bible is the best-selling book of all the time and nothing else comes close.
- The **sheer octane of His brilliance & His teaching** impacted our world like no one else who has ever lived.

I want to walk through five simple reasons for this... just five of many reasons why Jesus' teaching changed the world, **starting with...**

1. How He taught

After Jesus gives the Sermon on the mount, we're told in **Luke 4:43** that **"The people were amazed at his teaching, for He spoke with authority."**

- The Sermon on the Mount, by the way, is the single most **influential**, most **dissected**, most **studied teaching** in the history of the world.
- We're told, in **Matthew 7:28-29**, that *"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."*

How did Jesus teach people? He taught with authority... apparently **not**

as people were used to being taught.

- So, we have to back up for a moment and ask, how were people used to being taught?
- In Jesus' day, the **great teachers were called *rabbis***. He Himself was called *Rabbi* about 11 times in the Gospels.
- And so, to more fully understand Jesus, we should understand what it means to be a rabbi.

Let me ask you this: If you had to guess **how many rabbis were mentioned in the Old Testament**, how many would you say?

- Give it a shot! Just pick a number. How many rabbis are there in the Old Testament? The correct answer might surprise you.
- The correct answer is... **zero!** That's right... **there are NO** rabbis in the Old Testament.

You **wont even find the word "Rabbi"** in the OT let alone anyone who actually was one. There's a really important reason for this.

- In the Old Testament, Israel has **prophets** and **priests** and **kings**, and then something happens before Jesus gets here.
- Israel is divided into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Well, over time, **Israel is obliterated by the Assyrians** and the **Judah is overrun by the Babylonians...**

- with most of its people forced into exile throughout the Babylonian Empire.
- And so, because most Israelites no longer have the opportunity or any means to go to the temple,
- **the priesthood that you do read about** in the OT becomes unimportant to the daily life of the Jewish people.

Years and years later, **even after many of the exiles return to Israel**, they're overrun again...

- and occupied by the world's newest superpower, Rome...
- who, **to make matters even worse**, completely destroy the Temple in Jerusalem in **AD 70**.
- So, they have **no army**, they have **no wealth**, they have **no freedom**, they have **no power**;

- And they have **no prophets**, no **priests**, and no **kings**.

What do they have? They have a Book. Nobody else ever had a book like this Book.

- This Book told them **there is a God**... that there is **one God** (nobody else taught this), and that **He made everything**.
- This Book told them **what that God is like**... **why He made the earth**... **why we're here** and so on.
- This Book **kept them together** when they lost everything.

Other nations had things they were really proud of that looked really impressive.

- **Rome** had armies, **Greece** had culture, **Egypt** had wealth, and **Phoenicia** had ships.
- Well, **Israel had a Book**... and they loved this Book.
- In fact, they **became known as *the People of the Book***.

And so, without kings, priests, & prophets in Israel, there **emerged a new kind of office/job**, filled by those who knew & loved this Book...

- a new kind of position called a ***Rabbi***... someone who not only teach the words of the Book...
- But who could guide people regarding how to live out the words of the Book.
- And, because of this, rabbis became some of the most important and revered people in all of Israel. (Rabbi=My Master)

Rabbis knew & loved ***the Book***... and when they taught it, what they would do is **cite other great rabbis** for the correct interpretation of the Scriptures.

- *"Rabbi Shammai says this while Rabbi Hillel says that."* That wasn't a sign that they were bad teachers;
- It's simply the way it was done... very much like in our day when a judge is going to make a ruling.
- We expect a good judge to cite precedent over how a law has been interpreted in the past.

Now, although Jesus never went through the traditional hoops to become a rabbi, He was (*as I said*) called "rabbi" 11 times in the NT.

- Even a **Pharisee named Nicodemus** called him rabbi in John 3:2.
- **And yet**, there were things Jesus did that made Him very different from any rabbi anyone of His day had ever seen.

Very often what He says is, "*Truly, I say to you...*" In fact, many times He'll say that twice.

- In **John 6:47**, for example, Jesus said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who believes in Me has eternal life.*"
- It appears 75 times in the Gospels... and each and every time, rather than merely cite precedence, He's exhorting them in some new truth.

For example, Jesus would often begin his teachings saying,

- "*You've heard it said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, **but I say to you...***" (Matthew 5:38-39)
- "*You have heard it said, love your neighbor hate your enemy... **but, I say to you, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you...***" (Matthew 5:43)

See, Jesus is not only claiming to understand the teachings the Torah, but is claiming to have a **clearer, more authoritative understanding**

- of the Torah than all the Rabbis before Him.
- In **Mark 1:27**, it says that "*The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!'*"

What made Jesus so incredibly unique, though, was that He *not only* spoke with **unparalleled authority**,

- But He lived with **unimaginable humility** as well.
- This one Rabbi *not only* **amazed people** with the life-changing truths He taught, but a life characterized by:
- **washing His follower's feet**... a life **servng the needy**... and a life of **feeling and responding** to the suffering of those around Him.

This combination of absolute humility & a **breath-taking claim to know things no one else has ever known** before is absolutely unique in

history.

So, why else would I call Jesus the world's Master Teacher? Well, it's because of "How He Taught" (with authority) ... as well as "**Why he taught.**"

2. Why He Taught

So much of our teaching today is about the **transfer of information**; where the **teacher pours the required knowledge** into the student like pouring water into an empty jug...

- and the **student is evaluated** on whether or not he or she can parrot this information back to the teacher on the next test.
- And this, of course, is **why the number one question** in any junior and senior high school class is "*Will this be on the test?*"
- If it is, I'll take notes, if it isn't, what you learned just may stay in your brain an hour or so before it's lost forever!

Did you ever notice, though, that when Jesus taught, no one ever took notes? (*ok... I know... no paper/smart phones, etc!*)

- In fact, did you ever notice that **Jesus never hands out any outlines** with blanks to fill in before He starts to teach?
- And why not? Because we automatically remember what changes our lives...
- and **that's why Jesus taught everything He taught... to change our lives... to transform our very destiny.**

No one was about to forget what Jesus taught on that hillside when he taught the Sermon on the Mount.

- If you were around on **9/11**, or a little older, when **John Kennedy** got shot, or little older, when **Pearl Harbor** got attacked, than you just remember. These events changed you.

Back **before Joyce and I were married**, I was a certified advanced scuba diver.

- I mean, if I couldn't find someone to go diving with me, I'd just go myself.
- Well, one time, I went diving down in the Florida Keys... it was

just me and a local I had just met down there.

We went on a night dive... around 10pm... **to a ledge wall** that dropped hundreds and hundreds of feet.

- Now, by that time, I probably had only around five night-dives logged in.
- But, as much as I loved to dive 80' down in the dark of night, this time I was gonna be diving around a bunch of moray eels

You see, as much as I hate snakes, **I wasn't particularly fond of a 7' finned green moray eel with razor teeth!**

- Being a local to these waters, my dive buddy that night became somewhat of a rabbi to me...
- showing me how to attract them out of their holes without having their teeth get around my arm like a vice grip.

A number of morays did show their faces... but, what I didn't know was that a huge one gotten between my legs,

- wrapped itself around me, and came right up to my mask... showing all its teeth.
- Well, beyond all the **four-letter bubbles** coming from my mouth, my wet suit became strangely warmed
- as I **began a desperate little talk with Jesus** letting Him know that if He got me out of this mess, that I'd one day I'd become a pastor!

Of course, I effortlessly remember that moment. I didn't have to write it down afterwards to remember it.

- You see, when Jesus taught, He did so to impact the very life and destiny of His listeners.
- The fact that Jesus spoke in a way that was **accessible to ordinary people like us** should never ever blind us to His absolute brilliance.
- People remembered what He said because it changed the flow of their lives.

Throughout history, only Jesus could ever say, with complete certainty, ***"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them***

into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock”
(Matthew 7:24).

So, let me ask you... in your every day life, have you decided to make Jesus your teacher... your Rabbi!

- I mean... I know you believe in Him... **but have you embraced Him as your Teacher...**
- as your Rabbi **whose teaching and way of life** you choose to embrace with all of your heart, mind, and soul?

So, how did He teach? He taught with authority. Why did He teach? He taught to change lives.

- Then something else that was huge about the way Jesus taught:

3. Whom Jesus taught

Some of you remember the story of Mary and Martha? In **Luke 10**, we're told that Mary *“sat at Jesus' feet.”*

- Now, to *sit at somebody's feet* was a technical phrase that meant, "I have become the disciple of this rabbi."
- In **Acts 22:3**, for example, Paul talks about how he had sat *"at the feet of Gamaliel."*

He's telling us about how he had been educated and impacted by this amazing rabbi.

- In other words, part of what Luke is saying in Luke 10 is that Jesus has taken Mary, a woman, to be one of His disciples.
- Now, in that day, **a rabbi would never ever have a female disciple.**
- But, of course, Jesus wasn't just any old rabbi!

In fact, through His life and ministry, we see Him teaching Samaritans, people despised by the religious elite.

- He would teach children... and even Gentiles. And this **desire to extend education to anyone** would literally change the world.

So, how did Jesus teach? He taught with authority! When Jesus was

going to leave this earth, He said to His followers,

- *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."*
- How much authority is *"All authority in heaven and on earth..."* Well, that would be a lot of authority!
- Nobody else ever said that. Socrates never said that. Confucius, Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha, Mohammad... they never said that.
- Jesus said, in **Matthew 28:18**, that. *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

His followers actually took this seriously. We're told in **Acts 5:42** that, *"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching."*

- In fact, after a short amount of time, they began a process of education for both men & women called *catechesis* (*catechism*).
- About **AD 150** a Jesus-follower named **Justin Martyr** formed schools in Ephesus and Rome.

Now, as you can imagine, Rome and Greece valued learning.

- And yet, formal education was **reserved solely for male children of wealthy families**, the cultural elite.
- But the church remembered how Jesus taught everybody.
- So, they would teach **not only men & women, BUT slaves & freemen, young & old.**

This idea kept percolating until the Protestant Reformation when a guy by the name of **Martin Luther** emphasized the New Testament idea of the **"priesthood of all believers."**

- This had a profound impact on education.
- "Every person," Luther said, "needs to be able to read and write **so they can study the Scriptures for themselves** because, according to Jesus, we're all priests now."

This led to a **goal of literacy for everybody in a society**. No one had ever even envisioned this before!

- While referring to parents choosing *not* to teach their children to

read & write, **Luther said:**

- *"I shall really go after the shameful, despicable, damnable parents who are not parents at all but despicable hogs and venomous beasts devouring their own young."*
- Luther clearly had a hard time expressing his emotion!

Interestingly, the idea of universal public education found its primary expression here in America.

- In fact, the first law to require universal education was in Massachusetts, 1647.
- It was called, believe it or not, **The Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647. Isn't that a great name for a piece of legislation?**

We don't have snappy names like that for pieces of legislation in our day. You see, they believed that satan had used illiteracy as a means...

- of keeping people from the knowledge of Scripture... giving too much power to the very few who can understand it.
- So, it became law that **every town with 50 families** had to have a teacher... and **towns with 100 families** had to have a school.

Soon, in 1780, a Jesus-follower named **Robert Raikes** would no longer accept...

- the cycle of poverty & ignorance that was destroying the younger generation all around him.
- So, he took children **who had to work six days a week in squalor** and said, *"I'm going to start a free school to teach them to read and write and learn about God."*
- He did... and he called it *Sunday school*.

This vision that everybody, boy or girl, rich or poor ought to learn, all comes from what was taught and modeled by Jesus.

- Of course, **racial ignorance & fear** has **continued to keep us from universally translating Jesus' vision** throughout our country's history.
- And yet, those who truly embraced Jesus would not stop working to change that.
- In spite of the repercussions, especially in the south, Anglicans, Quakers, Congregationalists, and other denominations

- set up **underground schools to teach slaves to read** so that they too could have access to the Scriptures.

How Jesus taught was with authority. **Why** He taught was to change lives. **Whom** He taught was everybody. The forth thing is...

4. What Jesus taught

Somebody asked Jesus one time (this is what people do with rabbis), "*Which is the greatest commandment?*"

- To answer them, He quotes from **Deuteronomy 6:5** in the Old Testament... a verse every Israelite knew by heart.
- That passage calls us to "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*"
- But when Jesus quotes it in **Matthew 22:37**, He does something extraordinary for a rabbi. He actually changes the text a bit.

The greatest commandment, He says, is to "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*"

- Did you notice what word Jesus adds? Deuteronomy says, "*with all your strength,*" but Jesus replaces it with the word "*mind.*"
- So, what does it mean to love God with all your mind?

Well for one thing, it means to *be curious about God*. To think about it Him... to wonder about Him.

- You see, when you love someone, you pay attention; you notice.
- When you love somebody, if they change their hairstyle or change their fashion or lose weight, do you notice? Yeah, you do.
- Of course, **you can love someone and not pay attention.** In fact, there's an expression for that. It's call "a guy".

I'm kidding... both men and women can take even the ones they love for granted!

- Truth is, it's easy to take God for granted. I mean, do you ever notice how **people don't seem to be curious about God?**
- They'll go days, weeks, months, years, without ever wondering,

- *Is there Somebody who made this whole deal and what's He like? What's He asking from us?*

But beyond just reading His Word, those early followers of Jesus, because they deeply believed that Jesus was the source of everything,

- they **began to see learning** almost as an act of worship. They loved truth... and discovered that real truth always points to God.
- They started reading anything they could get their hands on.

Monasteries quickly became places of great learning. And, **out of these monastic communities** came universities such as Oxford & Cambridge.

- Understanding even physics & math & science could all point us to the majesty of God.
- This love for truth impacted our educational legacy in ways people have no idea.

In fact, what do we usually call folks who teach in universities?

Professors... because **they have something to profess!**

- And, **for the founder of Harvard** University, it was his Savior and Teacher, Jesus Christ.
- You see, **Jesus set in motion a love of learning** that touched all kinds of people throughout the world.

By the way, all these things that Jesus taught is part of **how the field of science came about** in our world.

- In our day, a lot of people **associate science with being rational**, whereas **faith is associated with superstition**.
- It can honestly break my heart at times, but **there's this myth that has arisen** in much of the western world today that science and faith are mutually exclusive.

And yet, there were attitudes that emerged out of Christianity that were indispensable for the study of science to be able to gain traction...

- One example of this was **the idea that matter is good**. Plato, for example, totally disagreed with this idea.
- For **Plato and the Gnostics** that would follow him, that which was physical was seen as bad.

- And so, understanding it had little appeal to them.

But, because those who followed Jesus' teaching disagreed with that, the study of physical matter was eventually accepted as good.

- In fact, the idea that the **physical world was created by an orderly, omniscient, and rational God**
- raised the expectation that order & reason could then be found in creation itself.

No kidding... Just the expectation that **there might be underlying laws & principles in the created world** around us,

- almost in and of itself, gave rise to the classical field of science...
- where the investigation of these laws & principles **became almost an adventure to understand,**
- whether it was on a macro or microscopic level, **the greatness of God.**

Back in 2009, NASA just sent out a new space telescope named after Johannes Kepler, a great 16th century mathematician and astronomer.

- Here's what Kepler wrote many years ago: *"God, like a Master Builder, has laid the foundation of the world according to law and order."*
- He said, *"God wanted us to recognize those laws by creating us after His image so we could share in His own thought."*

The vast majority of the pioneers of science... William of Ockham, Francis Bacon, Galileo, Copernicus,

- Pascal, Priestley, Louis Pasteur, Isaac Newton (who ended up writing commentaries on Revelation)...
- they all viewed **their work of understanding God's creation almost as an adventure** into knowing more of the majesty of God.

How did He teach? With authority. Why did He teach? To change lives. Who did He teach? Everybody. What did He teach? Truth. Then one last thing...

5. When did He teach?

One day, Jesus had asked His disciples about an argument they had had while walking down the road. Jesus asked them,

- *"What were you arguing about on the road? But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest."*
- I get that! Who'd want to admit that to Jesus that they were arguing over who would be the top dog in heaven?!

Well, that created quite a teachable moment for Jesus and His followers.

So, when did Jesus teach?

- Truth is, Jesus is **always present** and **always teaching** in the everyday moments of our lives.
- And that means you can become His student!

You can **trust His understanding of who you really are...** what your circumstances are really like.

- You can **trust in His authority** and the reality that **His truth lived out in your life**, in the power of the Spirit, really can set you free.
- So, the question is... **have you made Jesus your Teacher**, your Rabbi?

I'm not asking, are you trusting Jesus to get you into heaven when you die? I'm asking whether you've made Him your Teacher?

- *"Jesus, You know about life... You know about MY life, so I will read what You say. I will study it and I will seek to do what You tell me to do"?*
- Have you made Jesus your Teacher? Are you loving Jesus not only with all your heart and soul but with all of your mind?

Most of you in this room know so much more than that first group of Jesus followers 2000 years ago...

- But are the things you know in your mind... the things you've learned from Jesus...
- **Are they impacting the way you're living your everyday life?**
- If not, would you take a moment as we begin to close the service

to acknowledge Jesus as your Master Teacher...

- to make the decision to read His Word... and to do what He asks you to do?
- Would you choose today to walk with Jesus?