

15. Teachable hearts

September 30, 2007

Life brings many teachable moments to us. We can learn and grow or we can choose to ignore those moments and remain where we are or even get worse than before.

Nobody can make us to learn unless we want to learn. The Lord Jesus gives these great teachable moments in our lives. They are like golden nuggets for us to pick up and claim them as ours.

Some people may not know anything, but they sure act like they know everything. I am sure that you can name a few right off the bat.

But some people, even though they know a lot about certain fields, yet they are willing to learn more by keeping themselves humble and teachable.

Thomas Hardy, an English novelist, short story writer of the 19th century, became so famous that he could have commanded whatever figure any newspaper would have been willing to pay if he would just submit anything for them to print. But every time he submitted a poem or some literary piece he always included a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of his manuscript should it be rejected. He remained humble enough to think that his work could be turned down by an editor who would never be as famous as he. Isn't that refreshing?

A true teachable heart only comes from an humble one and that is what our Lord wants us to have. The Lord Jesus gives His disciples on-the-job-assignments to do all by themselves. When they have returned from their assignment, Jesus had a special pop quiz for them to see if they have learned anything. We will see the result later.

A. ON-THE-JOB ASSIGNMENTS

Luke 9:1-2 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Knowing that He would eventually leave the earth, Jesus needed to prepare a group of disciples who would carry on His mission after He was gone. And, thanks to Dr. Luke, we can see Him in action, training His men for lasting ministry.

The twelve had been ordained some months before. Now He was going to send them out in pairs to have their own ministry and to put into practice what they had learned. This was their "first solo flight."

But before He sent them out, He gave them two tools needed to get the job done, as well as the instructions to follow. The first one is Power. Power is the ability to accomplish a task. The second is authority. Authority is the right to do it, and Jesus gave both to His Apostles. They were able to cast out demons and heal the sick, but the most important ministry He gave them was that of preaching the Gospel.

This gives us a great insight about the spiritual warfare. Not only did Jesus' disciples have power and authority over all demons, but also all the believers of Jesus Christ have them, too. It is not about the importance of the individual, but it is all about the power and authority of the Lord.

The Apostles' ability to heal was a special gift that authenticated their ministry. Miracles were one evidence that the Lord had sent them and was working through them. Miracles alone are not proof that a person is truly sent of God, because satan can enable his false ministers to do amazing things. Today we must test a person's ministry by the truth of the Word of God.

B. TRAVELING LIGHT

Luke 9:3-6 And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. 5 And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." 6 So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

In other words, travel light. When God says go, we should be ready. No lagging behind because we're dragging a trunk full of extras. The main reason for this was a complete dependence on God for their provision. They wouldn't know where to stay and where the next meal would come from, but by depending on the Lord, everything would be provided for them. If the preacher isn't trusting God, how can he tell others to trust Him?

Their job as preachers wasn't to change people's minds. They were to persuasively present the message, but if they didn't receive it, they didn't receive it – and they could leave, and shake the very dust from their feet as they left.

Shaking dust off one's feet before he left the territory was a familiar act performed by orthodox Jews whenever they left Gentile territory.

Jesus wanted them to have teachable hearts for the Holy Spirit, so that they can be led by Him.

C. SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T GET IT

Luke 9:7-9 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. 9 Herod said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" So he sought to see Him.

The news about Jesus went all the way up to Herod the tetrarch who beheaded John the Baptist. Who was this miracle worker? His confusion comes from his own guilty conscience. He probably was wondering if perhaps God had sent John back to judge him. It is hard to see clearly who Jesus is when we are in sin and rebellion.

As a matter of fact Herod kept trying to see Jesus. But Jesus, unlike some modern "religious celebrities," did not make it a point to go out of His way to mingle with the high and mighty. Jesus later called the evil king a "female fox" and was not intimidated by his threats. When Herod and Jesus did finally meet, the king hoped to see a miracle, but the Son of God did nothing and said nothing to him.

Herod chose not to have a teachable heart because his heart was filled with evil and worldly things and there was no room for the Savior of the world.

D. SO MUCH FOR A RELAXATION

Luke 9:10-11 And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11 But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.

When they left Jesus in Luke 9:1, they were called 'disciples' - that is, "learners."

When they came back after their preaching mission, they were called 'apostles' - that is, "those sent with authority and a message."

The Apostles returned and gave a glowing report of their ministry, and Jesus suggested that they all take some time off for rest according to Mark 6. Someone once said, "If we don't come apart and rest, we'll just come apart." Their mission of preaching and healing had been demanding and they all needed time alone for physical and spiritual renewal.

But there was a great multitude which followed Jesus and His disciples. Jesus, without any rest, continued to minister to them.

E. ANOTHER TEACHABLE MOMENT AFTER A MIRACLE

Luke 9:12-17 When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." 13 But He said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people." 14 For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." 15 And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16 Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17 So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

While the disciples saw the crowd as a bother, Jesus saw the crowd with love, care and compassion. Our Lord was not the kind of person who could teach the Word and then say, "Bye" to hungry people.

James 2:16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

According to the four Gospels, there were five thousand men plus their families. These people were satisfied spiritually by the gracious words from Jesus, now their stomachs were empty and needed to be fed. There were no Safeway or Super WalMart near by to get foods for these great multitude.

When the disciples heard their Master told them, "You give them something to eat," they thought that He was having a heat stroke or something. In their minds, He was losing it.

So far the disciples had witnessed what Jesus had done – The wind and waves of the sea of Galilee obeyed Him completely; He cast out many demons out of the two demon-possessed men; He brought a dead girl back to life; and healed countless number of people.

But while they were looking at the sea of fifteen to twenty thousand people in that area, their trust in Jesus and spiritual imagination just were paralyzed and they completely forgot about what Jesus could do. That is when they just flunk Jesus' pop quiz. Jesus saw another teachable moment for them.

Before we go any further, we need to define the word 'Miracle':
Miracle is a supernatural intervention of God in which He interrupts natural laws for His own sovereign purpose. In other words, if we can explain the method, it is not a miracle. It is rare and when it happens, the result is immediate and complete, no waiting period or a half way done.

We only find miracles in impossible situations, where the wonder of nature stops and the power of the deity begins. If a person receives the glory for performing miracles, we know that God isn't in them.

When Jesus said to them, *"You give them something to eat."* He already knew what He was going to do. In the crisis hours of life, when our resources are low and our responsibilities are great, it is good to remember that God already has the problem solved.

By the way when Jesus blessed before the meal, He wasn't blessing the food. He blessed God the Father for supplying it. The idea of praying before a meal isn't to bless the food. It is to thank God for blessing us with the food. Of course, the Lord will bless our hearts and foods in result for that thankful heart.

As Jesus continuously broke the five loaves of bread into the baskets, breads and fish were multiplying in His hands. Jesus was the "producer" and His disciples were the "distributors."

Some may say, "Why doesn't this gracious God do the same thing now to all those starving people around the world?" Actually, there are enough foods are sent to Africa to feed all those people and more. Then what happened to those food supplies? The evil people hoarded them for their own selfish wealth while others literally starve to death.

Twelve baskets full of food happened to be left over to remind the disciples of Jesus about His power and authority over everything.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) True teachable heart only comes from a humble one and that is what our Lord wants us to have.

2) In the crisis hours of life, when our resources are low and our responsibilities are great, it is good to remember that God already has the problem solved.

3) Do you have a teachable heart to the Lord and the people whom He put before your life? Or do you act as if you know everything? If you do, that is the evidence that you know very little. Be open to Him and His Word to mold you, shape you into the image of His Son Jesus Christ.