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# **O Lord, Teach Me!**

**#1318-A**

**Series: What the Word Says About the Word**

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# O Lord, Teach Me!

*To the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus, our hearts bow before You in adoration and praise. We acknowledge, our Father, in Your very presence, the awesomeness that fills our spirits when we recognize that we have an immediate audience with the King of kings. The thought, Father, that You would open Your Word and literally speak to our hearts, causes us to tremble with excitement. We pray, our Father, that those of us doing the teaching would get out of Your way, so Your Holy Spirit, who is our teacher, could do His work.*

*Above all, Father, we pray You would make our hearts responsive and receptive, and that what we learn might remain to the glory and honor of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We ask for Your comfort to be upon those in our midst who are in need of comfort; whose hearts are breaking; whose lives are struggling; whose emotions are running the gamut from sad to exhilarated, and back to sad again. For those, Father, who have burdens for others that they cannot seem to lose, we pray, our Father, that Your spirit would enable us and comfort us and strengthen us, so we might be aware that it is Your presence in our lives changing us.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*

Maybe you know someone like Johnny. Maybe someone lives in your home like Johnny. Johnny didn't like to go to school. He would rather stay home and play basketball, watch television, and make life miserable for his five-year old sister, and his thirty-year old mother.

She tried everything in the book to motivate him to want to be educated. She made him go to school, but he always went kicking and screaming, crying and complaining. He had a very simple problem. He was too bright. He had an IQ that was off the charts, and he picked everything up so fast, that he determined if the school board would just mail him his books and leave him alone,

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he would do the rest. His weary parents talked to psychologists, teachers, and parents of other children like him, but nothing seemed to help.

Finally, mom got an idea. He wanted desperately to play on the neighborhood basketball team. So, she decided to try a little reverse psychology on the pesky, little genius. He said, “Mom, I need to go to basketball practice today,” as he climbed in their beat-up Suburban after school. “We’re setting up plays and practicing for our first game with the Harlandale Hawks. I’ve got to go.”

“I don’t think so,” his mom quietly replied. The boy was about to throw one of his nine, on-a-scale-of-one-to-ten fits, when his mom interrupted and said, “No. I think you’re really too good to have to be coached. I’ve seen you throw that basketball, and you know as much about the game as anyone else. I’ll take you to the game Thursday, but you can’t go to practice.” With that, she pulled into the driveway at home, went in the house, and began to cook dinner.

It was a joy in a way, to hear the boy’s arguments. He said, “Mom, I won’t know the plays. Mom, the coach is going to teach us how to take an inbound pass on the run and I’ve never done that.” Still there was no movement on mom’s part. “Mom, you don’t understand. I won’t be a part of the team. He might not even let me play.” Silence.

“I’ve seen you in the backyard,” she finally said. “You know that the round ball goes in the hoop with the net on it, don’t you? That’s all you need to know.” It wasn’t. She took him to the game on Thursday. The coach left him on the bench most of the game, which was where he belonged. When he did get into the game, he ran into his own players because he didn’t know the plays. He dropped the inbound pass because he had missed practice and didn’t know what he was supposed to do to keep his eye on the ball. He fouled three times in ten minutes because he didn’t know how to play the game without running into other people.

Embarrassed and despondent, he got in the car, and on the way home he said, “I’ll never play again. I failed!” His wise mother was waiting for that moment, and she said, “No, son, you tried to play the game without being taught. Your coach is the best teacher around, but unless you appear and ask to be taught, you’ll make a mess.” And then, she zeroed in for the kill. She said,

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“You know son, school is like that, only more so. You can’t teach yourself. What’s in the books is information. What the teacher does is take that information and turn it into understanding. That’s why you go to school.”

Johnny got up the next morning, dressed for school, and went without a complaint. He was still just as smart. No, he was smarter. Because now he was smart enough to know that unless someone took that information that he could read for himself and transform it into something usable, he would never make the grade.

Nowhere, beloved, is that principle more relevant than it is in the realm of the Spirit. Physical instruction was given to us as an example of how spiritual instruction would work. In the Spirit realm, however, it is even more important for two reasons. One, spiritual instruction can only come from one teacher, and two, there is only one textbook.

God can use helpers, teachers’ aides if you will, to explain and relate truth. But all understanding comes from Him, and Him alone. Do you believe that? If you ever forget that, you’ll lose it all. John wrote these words in I John 2, where it says this:

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.  
(I John 2:27 NKJV)

In other words, in the Spirit realm, it is possible to learn even without a physical teacher. It is true that much of our learning comes through others God is using to teach us as vessels or vehicles, and that’s as it should be, but God is able to teach you spiritual truth directly. Unless you abide in Him, let Him teach you, and ask Him to teach you, you can have the best instructors in the world; you can read all the best books in the world; you can listen to all the radio programs in the world, and guess what? You will learn exactly nothing. Nothing? Oh, you’ll learn facts, but your life will not be changed.

God gave us a series of examples in the Bible about teaching and how it’s supposed to take place. He said we are to learn:

...line upon line, precept upon precept...

(Isaiah 28:13 paraphrase)

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It was to be a *continuous* education. He said we are to focus on it:

when we walk by the way, when we rise up in the morning,  
when we go to sleep at night, (Deuteronomy 6:7 paraphrase)

It was to be a *consuming* education. He said we are to pass it on to one another.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2 NKJV)

It was to be a *communicated* education.

But interestingly enough, the true source of all wisdom was to be invisible. John 16 explains it. Remember this and teach it to your children.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Spirit, the Comforter] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

(John 16:7-15 NKJV)

Do you understand what He said? He said, "I have to go back to the Father. So, I'm going to place in you, your own personal, private, powerful tutor, Mr. Holy Spirit. Any time you come in contact with the Word of God, that Spirit will move in and act as an interpreter. The Bible may be translated into our language, but

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its deeper truths are written in the language of the Spirit. Like the disciples, we can understand the words, but not grasp the truth unless we “have ears to hear,” and unless the interpreter teaches us.

Like a visitor in a foreign land, we don’t have the capacity to understand the language without an interpreter. We can mouth the words, but we cannot understand what is being said until the Holy Spirit, our interpreter, moves in, takes those words, and communicates spiritual truth. This is what is lacking. This is what is missing in so much of our teaching in the home, in the church, and in the school. We forget.

You can study the Bible without Him. People do it all the time. You can learn facts. You can memorize the Scripture. You can even pick out certain principles, beloved, but your life will not be changed. And the reason for this Book and the reason the Spirit was sent to interpret it, is not to make us scholars. It’s to make us wise. And, beloved, sometimes brilliant people like Johnny in the opening illustration, never get the picture. It’s why:

not many noble, not many wise, not many mighty have  
been called. (I Corinthians 1:26 paraphrase)

Those who think they can, in and of themselves, interpret truth, lose the capacity to listen to the interpreter, and they miss it. They get all the information and none of the power. The Spirit of God demands humility and dependence of His students. It’s why men and women often begin their ministries with power, then after they “succeed” in teaching or preaching, they drift off course. They stop listening to the interpreter and begin resting on the weight of their seminary degree, or their rave reviews, or their reputation, or the size of their following.

Jesus had quite a following. He was getting rave reviews, but still, He stood up and said,

...the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the  
Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like  
manner. (John 5:19 NKJV)

Now remember that. We have repeated it over and over again. You say, “Nothing?” “Nothing.” That’s what He said. And that’s exactly how much you can learn, He said, according to John 16, without the Spirit.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear  
them now.

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However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

(John 16:12-15 NKJV)

The Spirit can do no more apart from the Son, than the Son can do apart from the Father. Their minds were synchronized with the rest of the Trinity. That means they could work independently, but think in unity. That's the way it is with spiritual truth. Do you realize, beloved, that I can teach this passage and one of you will get one message that will stab you in the heart; another will get a different message. Why? Because our interpreter is personal. He's teaching you what you need to hear. He's teaching me what I need to hear at the same time, using the same passage. But nothing He teaches us will ever be at odds with the Son, who will never be at odds with the Father.

Their one source of truth is the Word of God. I don't care if you are reading, studying, memorizing, or listening to someone else preaching or teaching, beloved, you cannot learn anything apart from God's Spirit. That dependent relationship on the interpreter is so crucial to the process of transformation, that God told us over and over in Scripture, that understanding His Word and responding to it, is the result of what He teaches us.

Let's go on to our key passage, Psalm 119, our textbook for this study, and ask ourselves, why did the psalmist keep repeating himself over and over? He kept saying, "Oh, Lord, teach me." Why? He had the Word.

Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes.

(Psalm 119:12 NKJV)

I have declared my ways, and You answered me; Teach me Your statutes.

(Psalm 119:26 NKJV)

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end.

(Psalm 119:33 NKJV)

The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes.

(Psalm 119:64 NKJV)

Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your



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commandments. (Psalm 119:66 NKJV)

You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.

(Psalm 119:68 NKJV)

Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,  
and teach me Your judgments. (Psalm 119:108 NKJV)

Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, and teach  
me Your statutes. (Psalm 119:124 NKJV)

Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me  
Your statutes. (Psalm 119:135 NKJV)

My lips shall utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes.

(Psalm 119:171 NKJV)

Do you think he got the message across? Who was he talking to? Why did he keep saying the same thing over and over? Is this in harmony with all of Scripture? If so, why aren't we asking God in the same way in our day, continually to teach us? We have already learned, that one step to receiving truth, is to be so in awe of who God is, that we literally tremble when He speaks.

Then we learned to ask God to open our eyes so we can behold wondrous things out of His law. The wondrous things are things only He can do and a reflection of only what He is. Look at these passages we just read. In almost every instance, the psalmist began by extolling some aspect of the nature of God. Then having focused on that, he said, "Oh, Lord, teach me." Look at it:

Psalm 119:12	Holiness	Teach me
Psalm 119:26	Omniscience	Teach me
Psalm 119:64	Love	Teach me
Psalm 119:68	Goodness	Teach me
Psalm 119:124	Mercy	Teach me
Psalm 119:135	Grace	Teach me

In each case, having lifted his heart to the nature of God, He says, "Oh, Lord, teach me. I want to know You better. I want that aspect of the quality of Your nature that is so overwhelming to me, to be a part of my life. Teach me."

The next step appears to be, to ask God to teach us something particular and personal out of His Word. Please listen carefully. I believe this is where most seminaries and most seminars miss the

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boat. In an effort to impart knowledge, we sometimes forget that knowledge left to itself “puffeth up” (I Corinthians 8:1). So often, we neglect the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. It makes all the difference.

Knowledge	information	love your neighbor
Understanding	personalization	I don't love _____
Wisdom	application	pray for, do good, bless them

Step 1- Knowledge. What is knowledge? Knowledge is learning the facts from God's Word. In the illustration, God's Word says, "Love your neighbor." That's a fact. You can learn the original Greek word—that's a nice thing to do. You can see it in the context of the passage—we should always do that. Does it mean to keep on loving or is it a one-time thing? You can research the word, love, and find out if it means agape love or phileo love—that's a neat thing to do. But all of that is gathering information. There's a place for that. I want to remind you, that you can do that, beloved, and still be no wiser than you were before. In fact, you can become so enamored with your new-found information, that you use it to impress others, and still don't love them.

Step 2- Understanding. Only God can do that. That's what the word "teach" really means—to give understanding. Understanding is the personalization of knowledge. You know that Christians are to love their neighbors. That's a fact; that's knowledge. You may have even read the story of the Good Samaritan and you now know who your neighbor is. That's neat. But until you come to realize in your heart that you're constantly thinking, "I don't love Mary Smith. I can't stand the sight of her. She makes me sick. I wish she would never come around again. Praise the Lord." You have no understanding. You have information, and that makes you more accountable, but it has not changed you. Information is literally dangerous unless the Holy Spirit uses it to teach you. You have to ask Him to do that.

Let's suppose He does that. He gives you understanding. You now know you are to love your neighbor—that's knowledge. And Mary Smith qualifies—that's understanding. She has a need to be loved and she is "in your basket," so to speak. The phone rings. It's Mary. Hostility rises up within you. You speak to her rudely.

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You refuse her invitation to dinner because you can't stand being around her. You hang up the phone and have your quiet time and thank God for showing you how hateful you are. Hallelujah! Beloved, you have knowledge about loving your neighbor and you now have understanding about your absence of love, but *you are not wise*.

Wisdom is the application of understanding. Wisdom says Mary is your neighbor, but you dislike her. You have a series of commandments from God. You are to bless her and ask God for His best. You are to pray for her; that is, intercede for her. And you are to do good; that is, you are to find ways to do things for her to make her successful. That's what it means to do good. Until you obey those commands, you will never have wisdom. You say, "I've tried, but I can't." That's a good start. When you can't, you crawl up into the one who can, and you ask Him to love her through you. Then you go out by faith and do whatever you would do if you could. God will enable you. And that, incidentally, is what grace is all about. It's being divinely enabled to do supernaturally, what you cannot do.

You see, the missing ingredient, beloved, in most of our lives is, we read the Word, we study the Word, we hear the Word, we may even memorize the Word without first coming to God, trembling at His Word, and realizing it is a personal Word to us, and asking Him to open our eyes to behold His character through every Word, and begging Him to teach us to personalize the Scripture until we are convicted of sin and drawn to obedience. It is only then we will have the capacity to be wise.

Now we can still choose not to obey, or we can try to obey in our own energy, and we will still fail. But until we ask God to teach us, beloved, we will not have understanding. We can become Bible scholars, and yet, be dangerously prideful and woefully untransformed.

When we open the Word and have fellowship with the Lord, we ought to cry out:

Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes,  
(Psalm 119:12 NKJV)

Then, begin expectantly, transparently to be fed from the Word. After we have confessed our sins, we can say:

I have declared my ways, and You answered me; Teach me  
Your statutes. (Psalm 119:26 NKJV)

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When we are overwhelmed by who God is, we can open the Word and pray:

The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes.  
(Psalm 119:64 NKJV)

You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.  
(Psalm 119:68 NKJV)

You see, our first responsibility as we approach the Word of God is to tremble in awe at who He is, what He's done, and what His Word has promised to do. The second thing is to ask Him to open our eyes, and take away the scales of self-sufficiency that we may behold wondrous things about His nature. Then we are to ask Him to teach us. Until we ask, we are assuming, that in and of ourselves, we have the capacity to become wise. We don't.

There are really four aspects of teaching. In Scripture, the connotation of teaching means to be trained. It is a process that involves a response that leads to a change; that's teaching. Now teaching in a Sunday school classroom or wherever should be no different. If our goal in teaching is to impart knowledge, you are on dangerous ground. I would be making you more accountable without showing you how to release that accountability into the hands of God and becoming obedient. Seminaries are often guilty of that.

It isn't uncommon today, for seminary students to spend two, three or four years or more, studying the Word of God, supposedly, and then come out of seminary despondent, confused, and stressed out. Their minds are filled with knowledge. They know more about history, more about the languages and more about arguments theologians are having about key doctrines, but oftentimes, they do not know Jesus more intimately. Oftentimes they do not know how to tremble at His Word or stand in awe of His nature. Praise God, that's not always true, but when it is, what a tragedy. These are the men and women who will lead the church of Jesus Christ into the next generation.

What seminaries, Bible studies, Sunday school classes and preaching services ought to do is simply testify of Him. And having seen Him more clearly, every contact with the Word of God ought to cause us to fall down before Him in amazement and awe, and ask Him to teach us from His Word. We ought to have our hearts open, not only to doctrine; we're able to do that, but according to II Timothy 3:16 and 17, doctrine is a small part of it.

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All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16,17 NKJV)

We are asking God to teach us four things.

1- Revelation- The revealing of truth in a manner we did not know existed, translating it into the realm of the Spirit. I'll explain it in a minute and give you an illustration.

2- Explanation- Making what has been revealed personal and understandable. Otherwise, the revelation will have no effect.

3- Illumination- Expands, broadens, and deepens the truth by comparing Scripture with Scripture. It brings to remembrance verses and illustrations that make the revelation that has been explained, come alive as part of the whole counsel of God.

4- Simplification- This is what the Scripture does best and theologians do worst. God wants truth to be so simple a child can understand it. We want it to be so complicated that we are needed to interpret it. What God does when we ask Him to and when we let Him, is to take deep, complex truth from the Word and dissect it into reality, applying it to each man and each woman at a level they are able to understand. Only God can do that, but that's what He does. The gospel was not meant to be a doctoral thesis for the elite. It was meant to be something those who were not wise, or mighty, or noble, could understand and comprehend. That's why common, ordinary men were chosen to be His standard-bearers, and that's why an amazed world proclaimed:

These were ignorant and unlearned men but they are turning the world upside down. (Acts 4:13 paraphrase)

Indeed! That's why children need to be taught line upon line while they are young, because they still have the capacity to receive simplicity without offense. They'll appreciate having things explained in a language they can understand. Is it any wonder Jesus said the following?

...except you become as little children, you can in no way enter the kingdom of God. (Matthew 18:3 paraphrase)

I want to illustrate what we mean. Suppose you are reading the book of James. You come across a passage that says,

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the tongue is a flame of fire, that no man can tame.

(James 3:6,8 paraphrase)

You've read that passage before, but it never made a lot of sense to you and you never dwelled on it. But today you ask God to teach you, to open your eyes to wondrous things. Suddenly, it seems to leap off the page. Your eye moves back and you read it again. That's revelation. God has lifted from the pages of His Word something you never really noticed before.

Then you read a little further and it explains what it means.

The tongue is a little part of the body, but like a rudder on a ship, it literally controls your whole life.

(James 3:4 paraphrase)

A tiny spark, a careless bit of gossip, a subtle act of boasting, a lie, a sarcastic remark, can go forth from your lips like a fire, and you can't put it out. Now that makes sense. You are receiving explanation. You now know why it is likened to a fire. You now know what happens when a fire gets out of control. Got it? You read on. It says that the tongue is an enigma, because one minute you are praising God or teaching Scripture, and the next minute with the same tongue, you are cursing, condemning, gossiping or lying. James 3:10 says,

...these things ought not to be so. (James 3:10b NKJV)

That's illumination. The truth is becoming increasingly evident as you see its practical ramifications. There floods through your mind, verses on boasting, lying, and gossiping, and you see that all of Scripture confirms the destruction the tongue leaves in its wake. Suddenly, all the verses fit together. They are not isolated principles. They all relate to an absolute. The absolute is, the tongue is a flame of fire.

But what are you going to do about it? It's such a complex problem. Suddenly your eye falls back to James 1:19. There it is!

...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

(James 1:19 NKJV)

You cross-reference it with Proverbs 17:27 and 28, and it says:

He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.

(Proverbs 17:27,28 NKJV)

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The Living Bible says:

Even a fool is thought to be wise when he is silent. It pays him to keep his mouth shut. (Proverbs 17:28 TLB)

Then you begin to meditate on Psalm 39:1:

I said, "I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle while the wicked are before me." (Psalm 39:1 NKJV)

It begins to make sense. A complicated problem has a simple solution. You put a watch over your mouth. You ask God to guard your every word. You say less and you pray more. Not only will you not harm others, you will be counted wiser for it. How simple. How understandable. How wonderful.

Your mind races back to yesterday, and the unnecessary comment you made that wounded your loved one. That angry retort that was so thoughtless. That innuendo that you let slip and you made it sound as if it were something you heard, so it had to be true. It was just a spark, but now, the spark can start a fire, and once it starts, you can't call it back.

You have gained understanding. God has taught you something. Do you see the difference? It's something that can change your life. Now it's up to you. You have to do two things:

1- You ask God to put a guard on your lips, and you shut your mouth as though He had. By faith, you believe that your troublesome tongue can come under God's control, so by faith you act as though it has. As you choose to keep your mouth shut, grace pours through you, changing the way you speak—not overnight, but dramatically enough for you realize that the patterns of your speech can be changed. Now you are becoming wise.

2- And it all began when you humbled yourself before the awesome God of eternity, trembling at the thought that He had a personal word for you, and you said, "Lord, teach me." And that pleased Him, because He said:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will guide you with My eye upon you. (Psalm 32:8 NKJV)

He wants the Word to be more than a casual companion to you. He wants it to be:

a lamp unto your feet; a light unto your pathway.  
(Psalm 119:105 paraphrase)

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Light gets rid of fear; light gets rid of confusion; light gives direction. God wants His Word to be your guide, to take you by the heart and lead you through the tangled webs of pressure, persecution, and pain. He wants to teach you so that every response of yours will be His. Maybe, He's just waiting for you to ask Him.

I'm going to ask you to do me a favor. I'm going to ask you to do a study on the Sermon on the Mount and watch how Jesus taught the disciples, because I think you will find the pattern of how He will teach you when you ask Him to. He taught with authority. We read in Matthew 7:28:

When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,

for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. (Matthew 7:28 NASB)

Now the scribes, beloved, were experts in the law. They knew their stuff. But when Jesus, sat down on the top of that mountainside and began to teach, He spoke with a different kind of authority. Think about it. What was it? He didn't take the book of Exodus and teach it exegetically. The scribes could have done that. He didn't give them a lesson on the historicity of the Old Testament. The scribes could have done that. He did not even take the time to teach them about the chronology of the Old Testament books. The scribes could have done that. He taught them about real life. He didn't apologize for absolutes, He just taught them in love. Now watch how Jesus taught on that mountain. And when you pray, "Oh, Lord, teach me," He is likely to teach you in the same way.

He expounded how circumstances breed character, and character pleases God. He said:

Blessed are you if you are poor in spirit, meek, mourning, merciful, and pure in heart. (Matthew 5:3-7 paraphrase)

He took the world's concepts, even the church's concepts of what brought happiness and He crushed them beneath the weight of true spirituality.

Then He took things that were familiar to them, object lessons if you will, to teach them how to relate to their world. He said:

You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt that isn't salty?



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You are the light of the world, but if you hide your light under a basket, who is going to know it's lit?

(Matthew 5:13a,15 paraphrase)

Pretty non-theological, I'd say. But boy, did it hit home. He was trying to make them see that God wanted His light to shine through them so others could be drawn to Him. Then He took the commandments and He drew His listeners backwards from commandments to the attitude behind them. He said, "I know the law says, 'You shall not kill', but that's not the real issue. It's the hate in your heart."

But I say to you, that whoever who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

(Matthew 5:22a NKJV)

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(Matthew 5:23,24 NKJV)

He went on and spoke of anger, an unforgiving spirit, lust, adultery, loving your enemies, doing alms to be seen, praying pretentiously, and on and on and on. Not a whole lot of new information. It was mostly explanation, illumination, and a lot of simplification. They didn't have to wonder what Jesus meant. They didn't have to run to the Jerusalem Christian Book Store and buy a commentary. They just had to pay attention and decide if they were going to be obedient, or not. When Jesus was doing the teaching, the question wasn't, "Do we understand?" The question wasn't, "Does this apply to me?" The question was, "What am I going to about what God is saying?" And my friend, that's the way we have to preach and teach today.

They had three choices:

- 1- They could dispute who He was.
- 2- They could deny what He said.
- 3- Or, they could obey.

They are the same three choices we have. And, beloved, when we say, "O, Lord, teach me," I promise you, He will. Not might—He will. He said in I John 5:14 and 15:

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

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And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

(I John 5:14,15 NKJV)

God delights to give us what's in His will. That's an illuminating verse. It's a simple verse. It's not complicated, but it's conditional. So, we want wisdom, and we want to ask God for it. How do we know it's okay to ask? James 1:5:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach [He'll never scold you for asking], and it will be given to him. (James 1:5 NKJV)

So, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. It is always according to His will for us to ask to be taught; for us to ask for wisdom. So, whenever we do that, believing, as the next verse affirms, He will answer.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

(James 1:6b NKJV)

There are no deep theological rivers to cross, just truth. Say, "God, teach me." He will. Is that simple enough? When you ask for wisdom, you ask according to His will. And when you ask according to His will, He answers. You'll become wise. Is it because you are such a good student? No, that may well get in His way. Is it because you have such stature in the Christian community? No, that may be your downfall. Is it because you deserve it? Absolutely not! It's because He loves to keep His Word. And the less likely you are to be a great student, the more grace He gives, the more glory He gets, and the more likely He is to teach you.

In future lessons, we will be looking at the other aspects of what God's Word says about itself. Things God uses to get our attention. How we can be sure the fruit from the Word remains, and so forth.

But none of that will matter unless we clearly understand what it means for God to teach us every time we open the Word, every time we read it, every time we study it, every time we meditate on it. It means we are asking God's interpreter, the Holy Spirit, to take each word and make it come alive, translating physical words into a language we understand, and into a spiritual language we cannot understand, unless He interprets it for us. We are asking Him to take mere words and translate them

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into something so powerful, they can reach into our minds and actually bring out the thoughts and intents of the heart. Then, having exposed those thoughts, we can literally apply God's word personally, until reality is explained, illuminated, revealed, and simplified. And He'll make it so simple, a child can understand it. He'll make it so simple; your problem will not be to understand the theology of it, your problem will be deciding whether or not to obey it. And the more you ask, the clearer it will become. If you are praying according to His will, He will give you what you ask. If you ask to be taught, and you pray for wisdom, He'll do it.

Let's talk a little bit about the way He may do it. He may take the circumstances in your life, and cause you to mourn, to be persecuted, to be weak, to be misunderstood. Why? To bless you. That's what the blessed life is all about. Once you're being blessed, the Word will become even sweeter to you, sweeter than honey to the taste. What a privilege to have the Word of God. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway. It is the way to live in a dark world that's filled with enemies and pitfalls.

We have something that will light the way in front of us so we need not fall. But, my friend, the light has to be turned on before it can be of help. It must be pointed in the right direction before we can see. And we must always realize that the power is not the energizing batteries we put in it; it is the energizing power of the Living God, Himself. The Holy Spirit just keeps going and going and going.

Every word is true. It always will be. Every word is powerful. It always will be. And every word is alive. It always will be. So, every word is waiting to be poured into the recesses of our lives and applied directly to the wounds of our lives, and to personally, privately, and powerfully, change us.

Why do we so often then, live lives that are devoid of power or direction? Why is it we know so much Scripture, and live the way we have always lived? Could it be so simple we've missed it? Could it be that God is waiting for us to come to Him trembling, with His Word in our hands, asking Him to open our blind, spiritual eyes to truth, and let us behold wondrous things out of His law; things only He can reveal? Could it be that He's waiting for us to ask Him sincerely, continuously, and humbly to teach us? And could it be that if we ask Him, He really would?

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Let's pray.

*Lord, we need to be taught. We acknowledge there is only one teacher, only one textbook. We ask You, Father, to take what we have heard and turn it into understanding, that we, through obedience, might turn it into wisdom.*

*Lord, we don't want to come to the end of our lives filled with knowledge, but unchanged in character. We acknowledge our need. We acknowledge our helplessness. And we pray You will teach us, teach us, teach us, we pray!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*

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