

Chapter 5

CHARACTER OF GOD 3

MINISTRY OF JESUS

Introduction: In the first verse of the book of Acts, Luke refers to his gospel as a book about “All that Jesus began to do and to teach.” In this lesson we will look at the ministry of Jesus by focussing our attention on these two things; what He did and what He taught. *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1)*

- I. The gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry show a balance between the works that He did (Healings, miracles, feeding the hungry, comforting the afflicted) and the truths that He taught (Principles of God’s Kingdom, truths to live by).
 - A. Jesus was motivated by divine purpose as the Messiah who had come to bring in the Kingdom of God, but he was also “moved with compassion” as He moved among the people and saw their needs. His care and concern for people moved Him to heal the sick when that was the greatest need and to teach them how to live when He saw that as the greatest need. (Matthew 14:14; Mark 6:34)
 - B. Jesus maintained a careful balance between: Purpose (plans) and People (flexibility). He moved with purpose that caused Him to make plans, but he was moved by the needs of the people so that He was flexible to interrupt His plans to minister to the needs of individuals.
- II. There are many statements and other indications in the gospels that show Jesus’ awareness of the purpose for which He had come into the world.
 - A. As a twelve-year-old boy in the Temple He said to Joseph and Mary, “Didn’t you know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49 AV)
 - B. A statement Jesus made at a wedding in Cana when He was 30 years old indicates that He had a very clear sense of both purpose and timing. When Mary asked Him to turn water into wine Jesus replied, “My time has not yet come.” (John 2:4)
 - C. After His baptism and after John had been put in prison, Jesus began to travel and preach in Galilee declaring, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mark 1:14-15)
 - D. He was not impulsive in His actions and was not swayed by circumstances, customs, or the opinions of other people. (John 4:4; Matthew 3:15; Matthew 8:17)
 - E. Jesus was aware of Purpose - Plan - Timing. His whole attitude and demeanor, from childhood onward, speaks of purposefulness and plan. He was aware of and dedicated to the Father’s will and purpose for His life.
 - F. Jesus didn’t just wait for things to happen and then react or respond, He moved with a clear sense of divine purpose. But in His plans and purpose, He made room and made time for people and their needs.

- III. Here is the gospel account of events taking place in one day of Jesus' life, which show the flexibility aspect of Jesus' ministry.
- A. Jesus "...went into the synagogue on the Sabbath" (purpose), found a man with a shriveled hand there, and so He healed him (flexibility). (Mark 3:1)
 - B. Jesus "...withdrew with His disciples to the lake" (purpose). A large crowd from Galilee followed them, so He healed their sicknesses and delivered them from demonic oppression (flexibility). (Mark 3:7-10)
 - C. Jesus and His disciples went across the lake to get away from the crowds (purpose). When Jesus got out of the boat, a demon possessed man came to meet Him and Jesus set him free from the demons (flexibility). (Mark 5:1-2)
 - D. After returning to the other side of the lake (purpose) "...a large crowd was gathered." At this point, Jairus, one of the synagogue officials came and asked Jesus to please come and heal his sick daughter (flexibility). (Mark 5:21-23)
 - E. As He went with Jairus (purpose), a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years and Jesus healed her of her illness (flexibility). (Mark 5:24-25)
 - F. Then Jesus continued on to Jairus' house and brought Jairus' daughter back to life as she had died while he was on the way there (purpose and flexibility). (Mark 5:41-42)
- IV. The first aspect of Jesus ministry we want to look at is His ministry of "doing good." Here are some qualities of Jesus "Doing" ministry:
- A. He did good things. His deeds were for the good of others. He didn't perform displays of power merely to prove Himself or gain a following, but to actually help people in their daily lives. (Acts 10:38)
 - B. He was flexible. He did some of His best work during interruptions to things He had planned. Most of the healings - many of the notable things Jesus did - He did while on the way to, or in the middle of, doing something else.
 - C. He placed love above law. If love and compassion moved Him to do a good deed for someone, He did not allow technical points of ceremonial law to hinder Him. He offended the Jewish legalists by healing on Sabbath.
 - D. He ministered to practical needs as well as spiritual needs. Jesus' miracles were done in response to an immediate practical need. He was aware, concerned, seeing, sensitive to others. Jesus was not caught up in His own plans to the exclusion of others' needs. (See the account of the Priest, Levite, and Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37).
 - E. The things Jesus did were because of love and care for people, not to make a name or promote His ministry. Jesus was moved with compassion, not ambition.
 - F. He did not judge or condemn those He ministered to - He did not make them feel small or unimportant.

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- G. He showed people the relationship between spiritual principles and practical needs. The things Jesus did were acts of service on a practical level.
 - H. He did not advertise His good deeds to make a name for himself. He was satisfied with His Father's approval.
 - I. He demonstrated that doing good is more important than being religious. (Romans 5:7; Acts 10:38)
 - J. Jesus maintained a balance in dealing with "Urgent versus Important." He always took time to be alone with His Father in prayer and meditation to hear and see the Father's purpose. Jesus said "I speak what I hear the Father speak and I do what I see the Father do."
- V. The Balance - How we can learn to apply these principles in our own lives.
- A. Purpose and compassion. Make plans - be flexible.
 - B. Learn to treat interruptions with grace.
 - C. You have to fulfill your responsibilities even when interrupted.
 - D. If you commune with the Father, you'll know how to respond purposefully and flexibly.
 - E. Check your motives: Am I performing or ministering? Am I receiving or giving?
- VI. The second aspect of Jesus ministry is His teaching ministry. Here are some important things we need to know about the teaching ministry of Jesus: (Acts 1:1 *"...all that Jesus began to do and to teach."*)
- A. Jesus spent more time teaching than preaching.
 - B. Jesus spent more time with disciples than multitudes.
 - C. Jesus' teaching dealt with practical matters.
 - D. Jesus' teaching concerned heart more than head.
- VII. The importance of teaching in the ministry of Jesus and in His commission to the church.
- A. Jesus' Great Commission to His disciples and to the church was to teach the people of all nations *"everything He had commanded"* and to make **disciples of Christ** from all nations through teaching and training, not merely to make **decisions for Christ** through preaching. (Matthew 28:19-20)
 - B. Preaching and Teaching both play an important role in the process of bringing people into the Kingdom of God and maturing them as disciples of Jesus Christ. Preaching is declarative - it tells people what to do. Teaching is informative - it shows people how to do it.

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- VIII. There are some very important prophecies in the Old Testament that tell us about the renewed emphasis on the importance of teaching that will take place in the last days -- these days
- A. Isaiah declares that there will be an emphasis on and a renewed desire to come to the "house of God" where *"He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."* Isaiah is saying that in order to walk in His paths or live daily lives that are pleasing to God, we need to be taught God's ways. (Isaiah 2:2-3)
 - B. Isaiah further prophesies that there will be a major refocusing of ministry in which the ministry of teaching will gain a renewed prominence. The ministry of teaching will no longer be hidden in a corner or considered insignificant, but will be brought to the fore and become prominent and highly visible. And he emphasizes that the teaching ministry will not be weak or apologetic but will boldly and firmly declare God's truth concerning matters of daily living. (Isaiah 30:20-21)
 - C. In the Chronicles account of the condition of backslidden Israel, their condition is partly due to the lack of proper teaching. *For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law.* (2 Chronicles 15:3)
 - D. The Restoration Priest Ezra is given as an example of a teaching priest and described as a man who: 1) devoted himself to the study of God's Laws; 2) devoted himself to the observance of God's Ways; and 3) devoted himself to teaching others what he had learned and put into practice. (Ezra 7:10)
 - E. Paul explains in Ephesians 4:11-12 that teachers and the teaching ministry are to be among the foundational and authoritative ministries in the Body of Christ and that along with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors, are to be involved in equipping the members of Christ's church for service and growth. (Ephesians 4:11-12)
- IX. Jesus and the Teaching Ministry. Jesus placed so much emphasis on teaching that He was known as Rabbi or Teacher. Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, He healed sick people, delivered from Satan's power, performed miracles that demonstrated the power of God, but most of the attention of the gospel writers focuses on His teaching and discipling ministry. (Matthew 5:1-2; Mark 6:34)
- A. One primary response Jesus had to seeing the needs of people was to teach them. He ministered to their immediate needs by His compassion and God's power, but then He taught them how to live so that the same conditions would not overtake them again.
 - B. Jesus taught the multitudes. Even when His audience consisted of many people with varied backgrounds and needs, Jesus ministered to their immediate and long-term needs by teaching them how to live. He preached the Kingdom of God and taught them many things in parables.
 - C. Jesus taught His disciples. With those who followed Jesus in the closer relationship of disciples, He not only taught them truths about God's Kingdom and its application to daily life, but He also trained them to do what He was doing so that the teaching ministry could be reproduced and carried on.
- X. Teaching was common practice in the Jewish synagogues. The local synagogues were led by Rabbis or teachers of the law. The teaching of Jesus was significantly different from the teaching of the Rabbis and other teachers of the Law in both its quality and its application.

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- A. The Rabbis taught about things like:
- ❖ How much weight could one carry on the Sabbath?
 - ❖ How far could the burden be carried?
 - ❖ What is the proper length of the fringes of one's robe?
 - ❖ The degree of contact one could have with a Gentile.
 - ❖ How the Messiah would fulfill OT prophecies and Rome would be overthrown.
 - ❖ What kinds of seafood to eat.
- B. The substance of Jesus' teaching was spiritual truths applied to practical daily living. In the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew Chapters five through seven, we find the topics that Jesus taught about were related to situations that arise in every day life and had much more to do with one's heart attitude than with one's religious knowledge. Jesus taught about things like:
- ❖ Developing and maintaining healthy relationships with others
 - ❖ Dealing with and resolving conflicts in relationships
 - ❖ Relating to the poor and to people in need
 - ❖ Relationship with God, prayer and fasting, true worship
 - ❖ Developing right values: Material verses Spiritual
 - ❖ Trust versus anxiety: security and peace of mind
 - ❖ Judging others, judging ourselves
 - ❖ Maintaining moral standards and behavior
 - ❖ Being people of Godly influence in society
 - ❖ Obedience to truth verses knowledge of truth
- C. Many years later when the Apostle Paul wrote his pastoral letter to Titus, he advised the young minister on what topics to teach in the church. Again the emphasis is on practical matters that deal with how to live one's daily life in proper relationship with God and with other people. (Titus 2:1-10) *You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*
1. Teach older men: temperance, to be respectable, self-controlled, steadfast, loving.
 2. Teach older women: reverent conduct, don't gossip, don't get drunk, teach the younger women what is good.
 3. Teach younger women: love husbands and children, self-controlled, busy at home, kind, subject to husband.
 4. Teach younger men: be self-controlled, show integrity, seriousness, soundness of speech, respect for elders.
- XI. The ministry of Jesus shows the importance of both Doing and Teaching. The doing ministry helps people in their immediate need. The Teaching ministry helps people learn how to live.
- A. Let us commit ourselves to be like Ezra who upon learning God's truths about life, put them into practice in his own life and then from practical experience taught them to others.
- B. Let us keep the emphasis on the practical application of truth to life and not get caught up in spiritual pride because of what we know or spiritual tribalism because of doctrinal

differences.

- C. Let us commit ourselves to being “Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.”

**It’s not what you know,
it’s what you do with what you know.**

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. In this lesson we have learned about the balance in Jesus’ life between purpose and flexibility. What do you think are the dangers if a person has only purpose and no flexibility? What do you think are the dangers if a person is only flexible and has no strong sense of purpose? How can we develop a balance between purpose and flexibility in our own lives?

2. Acts 10:38 tells us that “God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power and He went around doing good.” How would you distinguish between “doing good” and “being righteous?” Which is more important (or are they both equally important)? How can we keep a proper balance between “being righteous” and “doing good?”