

# TEACHER

For our communion services we pause from our 'regular' series of Bible studies and present a devotion on a name or title of our Lord, Jesus Christ. There are more than seven hundred such names or titles. To narrow it down we have arbitrarily used the English alphabet. We take each letter of our alphabet and find a name or title of our Lord.

We've come to the letter 'T.' Jesus is the Truth; the Temple; and the Tree of life. By far the most common title beginning with the letter "T" is Teacher, occurring around fifty times.

The KJV translates the Greek word *didaskalos* as *Master*. It comes from a root word meaning *to teach*. Teacher or instructor is a better translation.

Josephus is an often quoted Jewish historian from the first century AD. He explains that every Sabbath the Jews assembled together in order to learn the Law. Jesus took advantage of this practice and would teach from the Scriptures each Saturday. He began His public ministry teaching in a synagogue quoting from Isaiah and applying the words to Himself.

Jesus was known as a teacher by the people. He set time aside specifically to teach the people not only in the synagogues but in the Temple and out of doors.

He was well received by the people as a teacher and was perceived as having an authority that the scribes did not have. The people were even willing to endure physical hardship to hear Jesus teach. The people who heard Jesus marveled at his teaching because He was perceived as teaching with authority unlike the teachers of the Law.

He taught his disciples privately. Jesus also sent his disciples out to proclaim the Kingdom of God; no doubt He gave them teaching material relating to the Kingdom of God so that their task was more than simply stating the fact that the Kingdom of God had drawn near.

For the early rabbis sitting was the common position for teaching. Jesus is often said to be sitting when teaching (Matthew 5:1; 26:55; Mark 4:1; Luke 5:3).

We think of teaching most in a formal setting. Jesus did some of His greatest teaching informally. He taught while He was walking along, experiencing the sights and sounds of His environment. He took advantage of every day events and turned them into teaching opportunities.

Tonight we want to focus on one particularly endearing moment of teaching. It was a teaching by example on the night before Jesus was crucified.

In the upper room Jesus washed His disciple's feet. Foot washing was necessary for both *comfort* and *cleanliness*:

1. It was necessary for comfort because people wore open sandals and walked wherever they went along dirty, dusty roads.
2. It was necessary for cleanliness because people reclined on pillows around low tables when they ate their meals, so that someone's feet were always near you.

Each home would have a basin filled with water and a towel for washing your feet when you entered. If there were slaves or servants in the home, the least important one would perform the foot washing. If there were no servants or slaves you would at the very least be offered water and a towel to wash your own feet.

Jesus had directed His disciples to prepare the Passover Meal in the upper room of a particular home in Jerusalem. They were diligent in all areas except one: Apparently they forgot to provide a basin of water for foot washing. You read in John 13:5 that Jesus had to **pour water into a basin** in order to wash their feet, indicating that none had been provided.

Picture the disciples entering the upper room. It would be almost automatic in their culture to look for the wash basin and to at least wash their own feet. But none of them had remembered to fill a basin

with water and so, one by one, they reclined around the table with their dirty, stinking feet in each others faces. Perhaps they each thought that sooner or later one of them would get up and fill a basin; or that Jesus would instruct one of them to do so. Instead the Lord went on with the Passover Meal.

Well into the evening, once it was obvious none of them was going to act,

**John 13:3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

**John 13:4** rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

**John 13:5** After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.

It was the worst thing possible from the point of view that the disciples were busted! This is what they should have done – any one of them, each of them, to each other.

But it was, from another point of view, the best thing possible! It was the best thing possible because it gave them, and us, a most endearing picture of Jesus as He stooped to wash their feet.

Afterwards He applied His actions as a lesson, saying in John 13:12-15, - being changed to bring change -

**John 13:12** So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "**Do you know what I have done to you?**

**John 13:13** **You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.**

**John 13:14** **If I then, *your* Lord and **Teacher**, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.**

**John 13:15** **For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.**

It was one of the great teaching moments of His ministry and Jesus handled the opportunity masterfully.

Example is a powerful way to make your point. Example was the first power point teaching! For one thing, the foot washing taught by example a nearly unteachable truth. It taught the union between the

human and the divine. It showed Jesus as God who became man without ever ceasing to be God.

Recall the details for a moment. Jesus got up from the table and set aside His outer garment in order to wash the disciple's feet. When finished He put back on His outer garment, sat back down, and took His place as the head of the table.

Jesus seated at the table, the Master and Lord of the disciples, illustrates Him in His pre-incarnation glory, having eternal fellowship with the Father and the Spirit. Jesus, girded with a towel, and washing the feet of the disciples, illustrates His taking the outward appearance of a servant in His incarnation. His outer garments laid aside for the time being, point to His setting aside the outward expression of His pre-incarnation glory while He expressed Himself as a bondsman. The fact that He was still their Master and Lord while kneeling on the floor doing the work of a slave speaks of the fact that our Lord's assumption of humanity did not mean that He relinquished His deity. He was just as much God while on earth. His act of taking His outer garments again, tells of the resumption of the expression of His glory after the resurrection.

Have you ever heard of the hypostatic union? The hypostatic union is the term theologians use to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time. The doctrine of the hypostatic union is an attempt to explain how Jesus could be both God and man at the same time. It is ultimately, though, a doctrine that we are incapable of fully understanding.

Theologians always use Philippians 2:5-9 to teach the hypostatic union:

**Philippians 2:5** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,  
**Philippians 2:6** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,  
**Philippians 2:7** but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.  
**Philippians 2:8** And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

**Philippians 2:9** Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

You can get lost in theology trying to teach that passage. Jesus teaches it by the simple example of washing His disciple's feet. I understand all I need to know about it. I glean more from His actions than volumes of theological constructs.

Jesus went on to make a simple application of His foot washing. Calling Himself **Teacher and Lord**, He told the disciples to follow His **example** and wash one another's feet.

If you want to know what to do in every situation, this is your example. Take a towel and wash someone's feet.

*Not literally!* I should mention that some groups do practice foot washing as a ceremony or a sacrament. They have "foot washing" services. Most Christians do not. We do not, *and we will not!*

I did run across one Calvary Chapel pastor who had an interesting view. He washes the feet of backsliders who rededicate their lives to Jesus. They are already "clean"; but they definitely need cleansing from sin. He sees foot washing as a great way to welcome them back into fellowship.

Nevertheless, we won't be doing any actual foot washing. But we do want to practice *spiritual* foot washing, because Jesus tells us to do so in these verses.

In any and every situation you are to assume the role of the least important servant or a slave and perform the most menial task or tasks for the spiritual comfort and spiritual cleanliness of others. It's a principle you can apply wherever you are, whenever you choose.

One more thing. If Jesus taught His disciples by example from every day life when He was on the earth, should we not assume He will still teach us this way from Heaven?

**I believe that our every day experiences can be opportunities for the Lord to teach us spiritual truths.**

A family friend of ours has been care-taking for her aging grandmother. The grandmother has a huge collection of teacups; 781 to be exact. She asked her granddaughter to prepare her a cup of tea. She did; but she neglected to bring the saucer along with the cup. It created a moment between them – a less-than-wonderful moment in which the granddaughter came to understand just how important it was to bring the saucer!

I got to thinking about it. What if the granddaughter in our little illustration is like Jesus and the grandmother is like us. We ask for something. The Lord serves us and gives it to us... but it's not served in the exact manner we would like or that we expected. It's a cup of tea, perfectly prepared and thoroughly drinkable. *But there's no saucer!*

We dwell on the saucer and get frustrated with the Lord. Maybe, just maybe, He has good reason to withhold the saucer.

God is speaking to us every day in a variety of ways. What He says by simile or metaphor or illustration or example will never contradict His written Word. It is to our detriment we do not let the every day experiences augment the written Word.

God is always trying to show us something. Creation all around us is a teaching tool:

**Psalm 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

David understood the value of creation as a teacher. One starry, starry night he wrote,

**Psalms 8:3** When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

**Psalms 8:4** What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

Ask the Lord to be your Teacher in the every day experiences of your life.

