

Awed by Jesus' Teaching February 10th, 2019

In January I began a series on *Living in Awe of God*. We looked at **three aspects of God: His creation, His character** and lastly **His promises**.

Over the next 4 weeks we're going to discover and hopefully practice **Living in Awe of Jesus**. And just like with God, this series could go much longer than a mere 4 weeks. However, I've chosen 4 aspects of Jesus' life and character to focus on.

The first aspect we're going to discover this morning is **Living in Awe of Jesus' Teaching**. Whether you believe and follow Jesus Christ or merely find him fascinating, almost everyone would agree that Jesus was an amazing teacher. You don't ever read that people were bored with his teachings. His teachings either drew you in wanting more or he infuriated you and incited some to go so far as plotting to kill him. There weren't many people yawning and falling asleep when Jesus talked.

In one of the earliest, and very few, references to Jesus' childhood, we find him in the temple asking questions of the teachers there and people **were amazed** at the depth of insight of his questions (Lk 2:45-47)

Throughout the records of Jesus' life we see a constant pattern of him teaching (Mark 1:21-22; 2:13; 10:1). And yet, what set him apart from many of the other teachers of the time was that Jesus was seen as teaching as *"one who had authority"* (Mark 1:22) and people *"hung on his words"* (Luke 19:47-48). The older religious teachers of the time had to have found the popularity of this upstart teacher very frustrating or irritating. They wanted to arrest and kill Jesus but they were unable to because every time he taught he had a **captive audience**.

To add to their frustration there was one occasion, when Jesus was in the temple teaching the people and the Pharisees sent the temple guard to arrest him. However, after listening extensively to Jesus, even the temple guards came back empty handed. When they were questioned why they didn't arrest Jesus and bring him back to them they replied, *"No one ever spoke the way this man does,"* (John 7:45-46).

In that 1st century culture in Galilee, the local synagogues would hire a teacher (who was respectfully referred to as **"a rabbi"**). This rabbi was responsible for the education that went on within that city's synagogue. And largely they taught already accepted interpretations of the Torah, God's given Law. However, there were some rabbis who were recognized as having a special teaching authority from God to make new interpretations. Jesus was recognized as such an authority by the people. These rabbis were allowed to have their own interpretation of the Law. This teaching would be referred to as **"their yoke"** or their interpretation of the Law. So, when Jesus encouraged his followers to take *"his yoke"* upon them (Mt. 11:29-30), He was referring to his own interpretation of the Law and He said that those who followed his teaching would find rest for their souls.

You can clearly see Jesus providing his own interpretation of God's Law in his Sermon on the Mount. Repeatedly Jesus says, *"You have heard it said...but I say..."* (Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44).

When you dig deeper into Jesus' style of teaching you begin to realize how amazing it really was. He didn't gather his students in a classroom day after day and instruct them in the Law and have them memorize large sections of the Law, like the other teachers of the day did. No, Jesus took his disciples and anyone else who wanted to listen out into the world and used the whole world as his classroom. He allowed life to generate the foundation of His teachings.

Even within that style of teaching, he utilized very effective and clever means of communicating truth about God and His kingdom and I want to explore 6 of Jesus' methods of teaching.

1. Jesus extensively used the Old Testament in his teaching.

- When **Satan** tried to tempt him, Jesus didn't use clever arguments to defeat him. No, each and every time he simply **quoted from the Old Testament**.
- Many times in his **Sermon on the Mount** Jesus quotes from the Torah and then gave his own interpretation of that Law – by emphasizing the heart over our actions.
- When answering a question regarding **divorce** Jesus quoted from the Old Testament
- When declaring **his mission** here he stands up in his local synagogue and reads from the prophet Isaiah. **Luke 4:18-19 (NIV)** *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*
- When asked **which commandment** he considered the most important he quoted from the OT
- In explaining to his disciples why he often taught in parables he quoted from Isaiah (6:9-10)
- When he **cleansed the temple of the money changers** he quote from Jeremiah (7:11)
- When Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem at the beginning of the week culminating in his crucifixion, people were waving palm branches and shouting out, *“Hosanna to the Son of David.”* Then Jesus went into the temple and overturned the moneychangers tables and healed the blind and lame who came to him. The children that were there were continuing to chant: *“Hosanna to the Son of David,”* and it records that the leaders were **indignant**. They said to Jesus, *“Don’t you hear what these children are saying? Jesus responded with: “Yes, have you never read, “From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise.”* Wow, what a blow. He’s talking to the self-proclaimed experts in the Scriptures and asks them if they’ve never read this passage. Of course they’d read it and certainly had it memorized. But what you don’t see here and which they would have clearly known was what came next. The actual text, from Psalm 8:2, says this: *“Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.”* They would have known that Jesus is claiming they are the enemies of God talked about here. That’s a mic dropping statement. Bam!!!

Many more time Jesus quoted from the Old Testament and by doing so he established a baseline of knowledge and credibility to his hearers.

2. Jesus used metaphors extensively: the reason this is important is communicates essential truth in a way that creates memorable pictures in people’s minds.

- He claimed the **7 I am’s**: *“the bread of life”, “the light of the world”, “the door of the sheep pen”, “the good shepherd”, “the resurrection and the life”, “the way, the truth and the life”, and “the true vine”.*
- Jesus referred to his disciples as *“fishers of men”* and *“the salt of the earth”*.
- Jesus called the Jewish religious leaders *“a brood of vipers”* and *“white washed tombs”*.

3. Jesus painted word pictures that were unforgettable:

- He made his teaching on **judging others** unforgettable when he instructed us to *first remove the log out of our eye before attempting to remove the speck out of someone else’s eye.*
- When talking about the dangers of being rich he said: *“I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”* Matthew 19:24 (NIV)

4. Jesus used parables to communicate truth about God’s kingdom:

By using parables he taught deep truths that would be remembered for a very long time. And also he said that for those who were genuinely seeking God and His kingdom, these parables would be understandable but wouldn’t make sense to those who weren’t. seeking God.

- When the Pharisees and tax collectors were indignant that Jesus was always hanging around sinners and tax collectors, Jesus could have simply told them that *“God loves them too.”* But instead Jesus told 3 parables about something which was valuable got lost and a search was undertaken and when the thing that was lost was found there was great rejoicing in heaven. The last parable has become known as the **Parable of the Prodigal Son** and most everyone who has heard this story could tell you

how God feels about those who have gone down the wrong path and away from God. The picture of God standing on His porch looking intently and hoping that His child will come home will be remembered far longer and be much more powerful than simply telling someone that God loves sinners.

- When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus answered by quoting from the Old Testament: *“to love God with everything and their neighbor as well.”* But when the questioner pressed Jesus a bit further by asking, *“who’s my neighbor”*, Jesus didn’t just give him an answer he told him the **parable of the Good Samaritan** and everyone understood Jesus’ exact point.

5. Jesus asked questions: (and lots of them)

Jesus was an expert at asking questions. He asked well over 100 questions. And by doing so, he drove the hearers to search deeper for an answer rather than just give them the answer. That’s a sign of a brilliant teacher.

- When being **criticized for healing on the Sabbath** he points out their **hypocrisy** in the form of a question: *“Which of you who has a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out?”* (Mt 12:11)
- To cause his disciples to struggle with **his identity** he asked, *“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”* and then made it much more personal with the follow up question, *“Who do you say that I am?”* (Mt 16:13-15).
- After his disciples were arguing about which one of them **is the greatest** he asked, *“What were you arguing about on the way?”* (Mark 9:33) even those he knew exactly what they were arguing about.
- To challenge **our depth of commitment** he asks, *“Why do you call me “Lord, Lord” and not do what I command?”* (Luke 6:46) Ouch. That can hurt but also motivate us.
- To the **woman who touched the hem of his garment** and was healed he asks the crowd, *“Who touched me?”* (Luke 8:45) And he asked that not to embarrass her but to use it as an opportunity to affirm her faith and heal her emotionally as well as physically.
- I love it at the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 – Jesus asked the local guy, Phillip, *“Where can we buy food for these people to eat?”* (John 6:5) knowing full well they didn’t have enough money to buy that amount of food.
- After all of the potential stone throwers left the area, Jesus looked at the **woman caught in adultery** and asked, *“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”* (John 8:10)
- Jesus began a profound, life changing encounter with a **Samaritan woman** at the well by simply asking, *“Will you give me a drink?”* (John 4:7)
- After cleansing the temple of the money changers the Pharisees questioned Jesus about His authority to do this. Jesus responded with a question and said that if they answer his question he will answer theirs. They realized that they’d lose face with whatever answer they responded with and refused to answer Jesus’ questions and so, he then refused to answer theirs (Mk 11:27-33).
- After his resurrection, Jesus provided a powerful teaching moment by **asking Peter 3 times**, *“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”* (John 21:15-17)

The Bible instructs us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. One of the best ways to do that is to ask open ended questions and then allow the other person time to think and process. It shows you care by taking the time to listen to them.

6. Jesus used every day events as a springboard to teach truth:

- Jesus saw the disciples' inability to catch fish to get their attention and then instructed them to throw their nets onto the other side. Once they hauled in a huge catch of fish he had their attention and then called them to be "*fishers of men*". (Mt 5:4; John 21:6)
- When the woman caught in adultery was brought before him as a trap he stooped down and wrote something in the sand and instructed those individuals without sin to throw the first stone (Jn. 8:7)
- Jesus noticed Zacchaeus up in the tree and invited himself over for lunch and that interchange changed Zacchaeus' life (Luke 19:1-10)
- When Lazarus became deathly ill, he intentionally stayed where he was longer, in order to not merely heal Lazarus but to raise him from the dead so that God's glory might be more powerfully revealed.
- When the paralytic was lowered down through the roof by his buddies, Jesus knew exactly what they wanted. But instead of healing him right away, he first forgave his sins and then healed him as a way of demonstrating that he had the right to forgive his sins.
- When he sat with his disciples outside the temple gates watching people put their extravagant offerings in to the temple treasury, he pointed out a widow who merely dropped two coins in as an example of generosity and radical commitment to God.
- He used the prostitute crashing the dinner party to teach Simon the Pharisee and everyone else there about the effect extravagant love and grace can have on individuals' lives.
- Jesus used the gathering of his disciples in the Upper Room as an opportunity to teach them about real leadership by washing their feet.
- After his resurrection, Jesus struck up a conversation with two men returning home after having their hopes and dreams about Jesus being the Messiah totally dashed when he was hung on a cross to die. By the time Jesus left them while sharing a meal together their hopes and dreams were restored.

Jesus set a pattern for us to follow that we live every day of our lives in awe of God and ready and excited to share our hope with others as **1 Peter 3:15** instructs us.

But this means living life with a God awareness every day. And living with a hunger and thirst for others you know to experience this amazing God as well.

Put It Into Practice: Closing Questions:

- How did you experience God this week?
- What was your favorite part of this worship service?
- What aspect of Jesus' teaching wows you?
- What color would best describe how you are today? Why that color?

And of course, if someone asks you one of these questions, it's entirely permissible to answer with "Pass". We don't want to make any unnecessarily uncomfortable, although a little uncomfortableness can stretch us.

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Jesus' Teaching Methods:

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2. Jesus used _____ extensively
3. Jesus painted _____ that were unforgettable.
4. Jesus used _____ to teach truth about God's kingdom
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What made them so good?
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