

# More Lessons From *the* Master Teacher



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Gen. 3:1–11, Rom. 5:11–19, Gen. 28:10–17, John 1:1–14, Matt. 15:21–28, Mark 10:46–52.*

**Memory Text:** “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road” (*Mark 10:52, NKJV*).

Who among us has never been ashamed of himself or herself? Who among us hasn’t done things that pain us to think about, and that we would recoil in horror at the thought of others knowing? Most likely, we’ve all been there, haven’t we?

Imagine, then, what it was like to be Adam and Eve after they ate fruit from the forbidden tree. Or when Jacob tricked his father into favoring him over his elder brother and then had to run away from his brother’s anger. How did he sleep at night? And imagine being the woman caught in adultery, “in the very act” (*John 8:4*). David had been there, too, and Psalm 32 was his poignant expression and confession of what it had been like.

Of course, that’s one reason the gospel is universal, and Christ’s death was for all humanity. Whatever our differences, surely one thing unites us: our general sinfulness.

Hence, true Christian education must be about pointing us to the only solution for our rather dismal state. This week we’ll look at our only solution, our Master Teacher.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 7.

## Instead of Hiding

**Read** Genesis 3:1–11. Why would God have asked Adam, “Where are you?”

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Typical stories of the Fall depict the fruit as an apple. But that’s not what the text says. It was simply the “fruit of the tree” (*Gen. 3:3*). The kind of fruit doesn’t matter. Eating from this tree was forbidden because the tree *stood for something*. It stood for the temptation to push God aside and to declare, “I can be the measure of my own life. I can be God to myself. I have authority over the Word of God.”

And, sure enough, when the snake, or “serpent,” got Adam and Eve to eat the tree’s fruit, their lives skidded off course. And then, when they sensed God nearby, they tried to hide “among the trees of the garden” (*Gen. 3:8, NKJV*).

How strange that God would ask Adam, “Where are you?” God certainly knew where he was. Perhaps the Lord asked the question to help Adam and Eve realize just what they were doing—hiding—as a result of what they had done. That is, He was helping them see the sad results of their actions.

**Read** Romans 5:11–19, where Paul, many times, directly links what Adam did in Eden with what Jesus did on the cross. What should this tell us about how Jesus came to undo what Adam did?

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One could argue that the plan of salvation is God’s response to Adam and Eve’s answer. They were hiding from God in the shame and the guilt of their sin, and God came to rescue them. In our own ways, we, too, have done the same thing, and Jesus has come to rescue us. Hence the question “Where are you?” could be asked of us, as well. That is, where are you in your sin and guilt, in relationship to Jesus and what He has done to rescue you from it?

**Whatever else Christian education entails, why must it entail, even emphasize, the fact that our natural state is to hide from God, and then point us to Jesus as the solution?**

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## On the Run

**Read** Genesis 28:10–17. What is the context of this story, and what does it teach us about God’s grace for those who, in a sense, are on the run from their sins?

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In his dealings with the rest of the family, Jacob, with his mother’s help, had fallen into cruel deceits, and now he’s paying for it. His brother is breathing violent threats against him, and he’s become a fugitive, headed toward his uncle’s place in Haran. Everything is unsettled and scary.

One day Jacob trudges into the dusk, and then the dark. He’s in the middle of nowhere, with only the sky for a roof. Finding a stone for a pillow, he falls asleep. But sleep’s blank unconsciousness is soon interrupted. The famous dream comes, and the ladder, or staircase, that he sees rests on earth and stretches to heaven. Angels are ascending and descending on it.

Then he hears a voice say, “‘I am the LORD, the God of Abraham’ ” (*Genesis 28:13, NRSV*). The voice goes on to repeat promises Jacob is familiar with from the family lore. Your offspring will become great. They will be a blessing to all the families of the earth. “‘Know that I am with you,’ ” the voice continues, “‘and will keep you wherever you go, . . . for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you’ ” (*Gen. 28:15, NRSV*).

Ellen G. White wrote of how Paul, much later, “beholds the ladder of Jacob’s vision, representing Christ, who has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. His faith is strengthened as he calls to mind how patriarchs and prophets have relied upon the One who is his support and consolation, and for whom he is giving his life.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 512.

Jacob awakens, and he says to himself: “‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it’ ” (*Gen. 28:16, NKJV*). What’s happened here is “awesome.” He’ll never forget the place, and he gives it a name. Then he vows lifelong loyalty to God.

**What can we learn from this story about how God, in Christ, is seeking to reach us despite our sins? Again, why must Christian education keep this principle at the forefront of what it teaches?**

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## Rabbi Jesus

Of all the chapter beginnings in the New Testament, none is more famous than this: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*John 1:1*). And John 1 soon takes you to the unforgettable verse: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (*John 1:14, NRSV*).

**Read John 1:1–14. What are these texts sharing about who Jesus was and what He was doing here? What should this tell us about Jesus as the great example of a teacher?**

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The same God who spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden, and to Jacob in the middle of nowhere, now shows up *as a person*. God, says the New Testament, was *personified* in Jesus. Through Jesus, we can learn about God’s will and God’s way, because Jesus was God.

The chapter goes on to say how John the Baptist was so compelling a preacher that even religious leaders from Jerusalem suspected that he might be someone special. But he was preparing the way for someone greater than himself. Someone astonishingly special was about to appear, and he, John the Baptist, would be unworthy to “untie the thong of his sandal” (*John 1:27, NRSV*).

The next day he saw Jesus and declared that He was the “Son of God.” That day, and also a day later, he called Jesus “the lamb of God.”

Also, two of John the Baptist’s followers decide to follow Jesus themselves. And when Jesus asks what they are looking for, they call Him “‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher)” (*John 1:38, NRSV*).

Jesus, then, is a rabbi, a teacher, but never has there been a human teacher like Him, because, again, He is God. In other words, God came down to humanity in the form of a human being, and in that form He functioned as a rabbi, a teacher. No wonder Ellen White called Jesus “the greatest teacher the world has ever seen.”—*Signs of the Times*, June 10, 1886. After all, this Teacher was God.

**Considering who Jesus was, why does it make sense to learn from Him the best ways of teaching spiritual truth? What can we learn from Jesus about why not only what we say is important for teaching but also what we do?**

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## A Woman Talks Back

Jesus is the Master Teacher. God's true character shines through in His teaching, and also in His life. Thus, one gospel story is all the more remarkable for showing that when someone talks back to Jesus, He still listens.

**Read** the story of Jesus' encounter with a Gentile (or "Canaanite") woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon (*Matt. 15:21–28, Mark 7:24–30*). Notice that the men in Jesus' circle are impatient with her and that even Jesus appears to dismiss her. What do you make of the woman's audacity? What does this story teach us about how Jesus Himself taught others?

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Jesus was near Tyre and Sidon. He had crossed into a place where strangers abounded and ethnic tension bristled. The Greek-speaking city dwellers looked down on Jewish farmers in the countryside, and the Jewish farmers looked down on them in return.

Not long before, Herod, the puppet governor of Galilee, Jesus' home territory, had executed John the Baptist. But John was a man whose vision Jesus largely shared, and the execution seemed ominous. Jesus had begun to come face-to-face with the danger of His mission.

Feeling the strain, Jesus entered a house, hoping, so Mark says in his account, that no one would know He was there (*Mark 7:24*). But the woman found Him.

In the culture of that time and place, a woman had no right to assert herself. What is more, this woman belonged to a culture and ethnic group the Jews had little time for, and this put her at a further disadvantage.

But the woman's daughter was sick. She wanted help, and she persisted in asking for it.

Jesus dismissed her. " 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs,' " He said (*Matt. 15:26, NRSV*). The remark could have hurt her feelings.

And then something remarkable happened. She then responded. She was familiar with dogs—unlike the Jews, who would not have them as pets—and she said: " 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table' " (*Matt. 15:27, NRSV*).

Her remark makes a difference. It seems compelling. And Jesus heals her child.

**“ 'Let it be to you as you desire' ” (*Matt. 15:28, NKJV*). How do we understand these words? How do we respond, though, when things do not happen as we desire?**

## A Student Who Gets It

Jesus and His followers had turned toward Jerusalem. As Herod had been concerned about John the Baptist, the authorities, including Herod, were now concerned about Jesus. His followers included the poor and other vulnerable folk hoping desperately for change.

Jesus wanted above all things to bring hope to the world. But He was sure, by now, that those with the most power and privilege were going to do what they could to nullify that mission. They did not want Him to succeed.

As for the inner circle of Jesus' students, the twelve disciples, they seemed eager to be on Jesus' side. But at the same time, they seemed baffled—or *blind*. For example, in Mark 8:31–33, the Master Teacher is challenging His students to *see* things hard for them to see. That is, in many ways they were still spiritually blind to what really mattered (see Mark 8:37).

All this is background for Jesus' encounter with someone who *does* see.

**Read** the story of Jesus and the healing of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar. (See Mark 10:46–52.) Notice the great mercy Jesus shows. Now consider how the blind man's desire to *see* leads to his decision to *follow* Jesus on the way, or road, to Jerusalem. Do you think Mark may be drawing a contrast between Bartimaeus and the other disciples? How does this story shed light on what it means for *you* to be responsive to the Master Teacher?

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Bartimaeus had wanted to see the curl in a baby's hair and the color of wheat at harvest. But seeing includes more than just what's physical only. This story, in other words, is about seeing spiritually. It is about *getting it*—about catching on to what the Master Teacher is truly about. Physical sight is one thing. It's an important thing, and Jesus knows it. But Jesus also knows that every person's deepest wish is for a new and better life.

**Read** Hebrews 5:12–14. What is this teaching us about true education?

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**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Test of Discipleship,” pp. 57–65, in *Steps to Christ*.

Ellen White tells us (among other things) that when we truly respond to the Master Teacher, “we long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 58). In the company of Jesus Christ, duty, she says, “becomes a delight” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 59). Now, from the Bible, consult Matthew 5–7. Here is the Sermon on the Mount, one of the great summaries of what the Master Teacher wanted His students to know and the keynote of the kingdom He came to establish.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 As God addressed Adam and Eve, and also Jacob, so Jesus addresses us. He connects with our deep longings, and He startles us (as He did Bartimaeus) into reconsidering who we are and where we are going. In this light, think about how we teach the Bible to our children and to one another. What is the difference between mediocre Bible teaching and the compelling kind that really makes a difference in people’s lives?
- 2 Is the question of where you are on life’s journey purely *personal*, or might it be helpful to discuss this with people you trust? How does the idea of the church as the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27) suggest that conversation with others can be one way of getting in touch with what Christ wants you to know?
- 3 We learned on Thursday that as soon as Bartimaeus could see—as soon as he was rescued from his physical (and spiritual) blindness—he *followed Jesus* on the road to Jerusalem. On this road he heard, every day, the Master Teacher’s wisdom. Now, we may assume, he *wanted* to bear Jesus’ image, breathe His Spirit, do His will. Why would someone take “delight,” as *Steps to Christ* puts it, in following a standard as high as the one Jesus upheld in the Sermon on the Mount?
- 4 Dwell more on the question at the end of Thursday’s study. How do we learn to discern between good and evil? How do we define what is good and what is evil? And why is what we do with that knowledge perhaps even more important than having that knowledge itself?