

CALLED TO TEACH

TO FOLLOW JESUS 5



Teaching Jesus in the classroom of our lives.

T. M. MOORE

A ReVision Study from

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Called to Teach
To Follow Jesus Part 5
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Called to Teach

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Welcome to *Called to Teach*

Welcome to *Called to Teach*, a study that looks at the believer's calling to give witness and instruction concerning the things of God, in the normal course of our everyday lives.

With this, the final study in our series *To Follow Jesus*, we come full circle, reminding ourselves of where we began, that all believers *ought* to be teachers, and therefore should strive to be the *best* teachers they can possibly be.

But our primary work of teaching Jesus to others doesn't take place in a classroom. Our daily lives are where we *show* Jesus to the world and *teach* the Good News about Him. If we can learn to make the most of every opportunity in our Personal Mission Fields, the Lord may be pleased to draw many to Himself, and to encourage and edify many who already know Him.

We are happy to provide this resource for your use at no charge. If you find these, or other resources of The Fellowship of Ailbe, helpful in your walk with and work for the Lord, please consider sending a gift to support this work and help us extend our outreach to others. You can donate at our website, www.ailbe.org, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

May the Lord bless you as you take up this study, *To Follow Jesus*, that you might grow in Him and His calling each and every day of your life.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Every Believer a Teacher

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5.15, 16

Excellent teachers

We return to a theme we have already visited in this series, namely, the calling every believer has to teach the things of Christ to others. We *all* “ought to be teachers” and so we *all* must give more careful consideration to just what this requires of us, and how we may fulfill this high and holy calling.

Over the centuries the Christian Church has been favored with a great many excellent teachers whose faithful and diligent labors have enlarged and nurtured the Church, helping her to realize more of her potential as a sign and outpost of the Kingdom of God. The names come easily: Paul, Polycarp, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, Columbanus, Alcuin, Hildegard, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, Edwards, Kuyper, Newman, Machen, Schaeffer, Colson – we could go on and on.

Certainly every believer should thank and praise the Lord for so many excellent teachers, whose works continue to instruct and equip the saints unto our own day, as well as for all those, called to teach, who have helped us to grow in our walk with and work for the Lord.

A calling to witness and teach

But these and others like them are not the *only*, and in many ways, not even the *primary* source of the Church’s witness and instruction in the world. As we have seen, *every follower of Jesus Christ* is called to the task of teaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to non-Christians and Christians alike in his or her own sphere of influence. Each of us has a [Personal Mission Field](#) to which Jesus sends us daily as citizens and ambassadors of His Kingdom. And no small part of that calling is the work of teaching Jesus to others.

Which, in fact, every believer is *already doing*. The challenge is to make sure that what and how we are teaching Jesus should be like the Lord’s own teaching.

We cannot rely merely on those who are called to the office of teacher to do the work of advancing the Kingdom by witness and instruction. Indeed, all those cited above would agree in a moment that their primary desire was to equip *other believers* to take up the calling to teach, for only in that way can the message of the Gospel and the Christian worldview continue to grow like leaven and glow like light through the sinful loaf of this dark and fallen world.

Still need convincing?

Consider: Jesus promised His followers that, once they had received the Holy Spirit, they would know power to be His witnesses (Acts 1.8). Certainly no small part of that witness, as we see in the Book of Acts, involved talking to others about the Lord, explaining to them the significance of the coming of His Kingdom, and teaching them how they, too, might enter with us into this glorious life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18).

If the followers of Christ do not take up this teaching mandate and make it a central part of their earthly business to tell others the Good News of the Kingdom, then the progress of the Gospel will slow, stall, and even be set back.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul commands *all believers* to let the Word of Jesus Christ dwell in them richly, so that they might teach and admonish one another accordingly (Col. 3.16). Christians have abundant opportunities

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for contact and conversation with other Christians, but, so often, we waste these opportunities on frivolous, trivial, and mostly mundane things. How much stronger, more energetic, and more effective would the Church be in the world if every believer was equipped, alert, and capable of teaching the things of Christ to other believers with real power and effects?

There simply is no way around it: If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are called, and you have been empowered to fulfill your calling, by teaching the Gospel and the things of Christ's Kingdom to the people to whom God sends you each day.

Make the most of the opportunities

Paul wrote that we must not miss such opportunities to bear witness and teach one another. The world is a spiritual wasteland; the powers of wickedness and deceit are active at all times. Every opportunity lost for advancing the Kingdom will be capitalized on by the devil and our secular, materialistic age.

We must be always alert to these opportunities, always ready with a word of instruction or encouragement or witness, and always earnest in pressing the things of Christ and His Kingdom on anyone and everyone who will listen.

To this end let us embrace the fact that, as the followers of Christ, we are all called to teach, and let us prepare ourselves accordingly.

For reflection

1. Do you think of yourself as a teacher? A witness? What part do teaching others and giving a witness for Christ play in your walk with the Lord?
2. When most Christians think about *teaching*, what comes to mind? Why?
3. What does it mean to be a witness to Christ? How does teaching factor into this calling? Whose job is this?

Next steps – Preparation: Make a list of the people you see each week, in all the places you go. Which are believers? Which are not? Begin thinking and praying about ways you might daily share with these people concerning what God is doing in your own life. Take the next step today, and talk with someone about today's ReVision and your calling as a teacher in the Kingdom of God.

2 A Way of Life

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

The Great Commission

This is perhaps the most mistranslated verse in all of Scripture.

Frequently, when I have taught the Great Commission, I will say, "Now there is only one imperative, one command, in this passage. What is it?" to which people almost invariably reply, "Go!" Because, of course, there it is right there in the translation of verse 19.

However, that translation is not quite accurate, and therefore that response to my question is not correct. The only *command* in the Great Commission is "make disciples."

Now making disciples, as Jesus continued to say, involves teaching the things of Christ to other people. Whose job is that?

Certainly those who are called to the teaching office in the Church. But, as I am arguing in this study, that duty of teaching the things of Christ to one another and the world also falls on every follower of Jesus Christ. In the Kingdom of God, we are *all* called to be teachers. As we grow in the Lord Jesus we *ought* to be teachers. Thus, we must make sure we understand *where* and *how* we must carry out this duty appointed us by the Lord.

So let's examine the Great Commission of our Lord a little more closely, and see if we can't glean some additional insights into how He expects us to carry out this witnessing and teaching mandate.

Ready as we go

The word "Go" in verse 19 is, as I mentioned, consistently mistranslated in our English Bibles. Rather than being a verb in the imperative mood, as it seems so often to be, the word is actually a participle, and is meant to describe the subject of the imperative verb, that is, *you* – as in *you all*. As a participle, it should be translated temporally: "as you are going."

So what Jesus actually commands is that, *as we are going* about the everyday situations of our lives, in order to make the most of those situations, we must be ready with a life well-lived and a word of witness or instruction, so that we might teach others to be followers of Jesus Christ, or at least to consider Him.

Let's face it, we talk about what excites us most. Seen a good movie lately? You'll share it with your friends, often with much enthusiasm, urging them to go see it. Get a new car? You'll want to show it off to all your friends. Got a new tech-gadget? You'll parade it out with joy for everyone to gawk at and covet. New child or grandchild? Out come the pictures.

It's the way we are: we talk about the things that excite us most. And when our relationship with the Lord Jesus and our experience of the Gospel of the Kingdom affects us like movies, cars, gadgets, and kids, we'll talk about these with anyone and everyone who will listen.

Our audience

So whom should we expect to be our audience for such teaching?

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Well, ask yourself, “Where do I go each week?” What makes up the *as-you-are-goings* of your life? We pretty much have these in common: our homes, neighborhoods, places of work, stores and restaurants, service organizations, churches, circle of friends, clubs, professional associations, and so forth. As Jesus was sent to a particular place and time to do His disciple-making work, so He has sent each one of us to our own Judea and Samaria, with the same mandate (Jn. 20.21).

When we begin to see our everyday places as our *classroom*, and all the people we routinely see there as our *students*, we’ll be in a position to start lining-up the curriculum of truth that we’ll want to present to them as we are going about our everyday tasks.

Assuming, of course, that we are growing in our excitement about the things of the Lord.

How’s your daily time in God’s Word? Rich? Full? Yielding regular encounters with the glory of God? What about your prayers? Do you really experience being in the presence of Jesus as you open your soul to Him in prayer? Do you find that your times with the Lord are increasing the hope of glory in your soul and the experience of righteousness, peace, and joy in every area of your life?

Work harder at your spiritual disciplines, and be sure that you go with Jesus into all the *as-you-are-goings* of your life, and soon enough you’ll find that you can’t *not* think about the Lord and His goodness. You will always have something to say about the One Who always fills your life with meaning, purpose, wonder, glory, and love.

For reflection

1. How would you explain the Great Commission to a new Christian? What does this require of us? How can we make the most of the time given to us for this high calling?
2. What would you describe as the *as-you-are-goings* of your life? Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#)? What opportunities for teaching or bearing witness are present there?
3. How would you evaluate your spiritual disciplines at this time? Are they giving you the kind of excitement and conviction about the Lord you need in order to fulfill your call to teach? Why or why not?

Next steps – Conversation: Is your current practice of spiritual disciplines producing in you genuine excitement about the Lord? Do you need to improve your prayers and Bible reading? Today, talk with a Christian friend about the state of your spiritual disciplines. Seek counsel and advice, and perhaps a prayer partner. Together look for ways you can begin to know and enjoy more of the Lord’s presence and glory in your times with Him each day. Commit to maintaining accountability with one another.

3 The Spirit Who Teaches

“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” Luke 12.11, 12

Teaching in the everyday

Every Christian is called to a ministry of teaching. We all need to grow in the Lord, because we all ought to be teachers. We must be prepared to bear witness to our unsaved friends and neighbors, and we must make the most of every opportunity to encourage other believers in their walk with and work for the Lord.

We don’t need a formal classroom to carry out this work. We don’t need the permission of pastors or church leaders. We have a calling to make disciples as we are going about our everyday lives. In everyday situations – all the as-you-are-goings of our lives – we have abundant opportunities to turn a conversation or situation to matters of the Kingdom and to help others consider Christ’s promises for their lives.

But how do we do this? Do we have to memorize all kinds of persuasive outlines? Store up an abundance of complex answers to objections? What must we do in our everyday situations, with believers and unbelievers, to fulfill our calling to make disciples as we are going?

Listen to the Spirit

In a nutshell, we must learn to listen to the Spirit of God.

Now the Spirit does not speak in audible tones – at least, not typically. The Spirit speaks through the Word of God, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Thus, if we are going to be able to *hear* the Spirit, it will be important to make sure, every day of our lives, that we are spending significant time in the Word of God, letting the Scriptures dwell within us richly, hiding the Word in the depths of our souls, building up a reservoir of understanding and experience that can be available to us at those times when the Spirit is prompting us to teach someone something about Christ and His Kingdom.

But we will also need to be sensitive to the Spirit’s *leading* in everyday situations. How does the Spirit prompt or otherwise influence us? In a variety of ways: He may put someone on our hearts, so that we can’t seem to get that person off our minds. By so doing the Spirit may be preparing us for some encounter with that person, or summoning us to pray for and contact a particular individual (Phil. 1.3).

In other situations, the Spirit may pick up on some word, phrase, or expression someone makes, striking it in our souls like a gong or cymbal, so that we focus on that word with anticipation until the Spirit leads us to some way to connect that word with spiritual truth.

The Spirit may also use conviction of sin – in others or in us – to get us moving in the direction of a conversation about spiritual things.

Situations that are on everybody’s minds – a sudden disaster, an election, a public scandal, a drop in the economy – can also be effective ways for the Spirit to lead us to engage others about eternal matters. The better informed we are on such matters, the readier we will be to speak about them, and to use them as pivot points toward spiritual matters (1 Chron. 12.32). Or the Spirit may prompt someone else, who sees something in us, to open the conversation by asking a question about spiritual things (1 Pet. 3.15).

Be prepared!

However the Spirit prompts us to engage a teaching moment, we need to make sure of a few things before we open our mouths.

First, the words we use in conversing with others must be seasoned with grace (Col. 4.6). You can't teach people by condemning or belittling them. You must reach out to them with grace, as a servant, eager to minister to whatever the expressed need may be. Grace flows through our words when in our conversations we show genuine interest in others, patience to explain matters, gentleness whenever we are challenged, and love in our tone of voice.

Also, as Jesus showed, asking questions can help prepare the minds of others for whatever the Spirit may give us to share and them to hear. By getting their thinking in gear and allowing them to put their own thoughts forward, we can create a level ground for sincere conversational give-and-take.

Finally, keep in mind that you don't have to do everything at one time. Teaching is an ongoing calling. We're not driving Gospel dump trucks around the town, looking for unsuspecting lost persons or immature believers to dump our whole load on all at once. Rather, we are more like physicians, listening carefully in order to diagnose the need, offering a little help here and a bit of medicine there, and realizing that sometimes cures for what ails us can take a long time.

Listen for the Spirit in the teaching moments of your everyday life. He can lead you in how to proceed.

For reflection

1. In the hymn, "More about Jesus," we sing the line, "Spirit of God, my Teacher be/showing the things of Christ to me." How do you know when the Spirit is teaching you the things of Christ?
2. What are some ways you might expect the Spirit to prod, push, or point you toward a teaching opportunity?
3. Give some examples of questions you might ask to begin a conversation with one of your "students."

Next steps – Transformation: In the light of today's ReVision, reflect on the week gone by thus far. Can you see any times when the Spirit may have been prompting you to speak to someone? Today, try to be more alert to Him. Whenever you sense the Spirit leading, simply open your mouth and begin a conversation: ask a question, make an observation, solicit an opinion. Go with the Spirit wherever He leads from there.

4 Begin Where They Are

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." John 4.7

Get your mind in gear!

The Apostle Peter wrote his second letter to the followers of Jesus in Asia Minor to encourage them to get their minds in gear for serving the Lord (2 Pet. 1.12-14). His instruction to them is good advice for us. Teaching moments pop up in front of us all day long. But we need to be paying attention.

If we can set our minds to focus on our primary calling throughout the day – the calling of being witnesses and making disciples – then we might be more alert to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as He calls class to order and opens the book of truth with the people around us.

In the Church today we have become so accustomed to teaching and learning taking place in classrooms, at scheduled times, and at the feet of those appointed as teachers, that we just don't have the mindset for making the most of every teaching opportunity that presents itself all day long.

But this is where we need to cut some new grooves for our walk with the Lord. Paul calls us to pay attention to what's going on in the as-you-are-goings of our lives, so that we can make the most of every opportunity the Lord brings our way (Eph. 5.15-17). Begin your day in prayer, asking the Lord to give you many teaching moments during the day ahead. Think about the people you will see, and get ready in your mind for how you might talk with them about the things of the Lord. Keep that attitude of prayer going throughout the day, so that you are in constant conversation with the Spirit whenever He wants to prompt or guide you in some way or another. Then, listen carefully for His cues or prompts. They will surely come.

This is a discipline that takes time to develop, but it's one we can all learn. It won't just happen; you'll have to *devote your mind and heart* to the task of seeking the Lord daily, and throughout the day, for just the right situations in which you can bear witness or help another believer grow as a disciple of the Lord.

Take the initiative

You'll also need to be prepared to take the initiative at such times, just as Jesus did with the woman at the well.

Sad to say, those who are our potential students won't normally be as ready for class to be in session as we are. So we'll need to get the conversation started, and Jesus shows us how we can do just that.

With the woman at the well, Jesus started where He found her. He could have sat at the well and said nothing to this woman. Or He could have prayed earnestly that the Lord would lead her to bring something up that might allow Him to engage a teaching moment with her. But He didn't do either of these things, and neither should we.

Realizing that this woman had come to the well with water on her mind, Jesus started where He found her and asked her for a drink.

Now, don't miss the extraordinary strangeness of this. The woman certainly didn't. She knew who she was, and she could tell that Jesus was a Jew and perhaps a teacher of some sort. Jews and Samaritans in those days had no dealings with one another. Further, it was unusual – and perhaps even a bit suspect – for a man to engage in a conversation with a woman unknown to him. Jesus brushed these taboos aside, and the fact that He did startled the woman a bit, but it didn't put her off.

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What are we afraid of when it comes to initiating a teaching moment with others? What “taboos” keep us from starting a conversation? Will we appear forward? Will some think we’re being nosy? Do we fear how they might respond as we start to turn the conversation toward spiritual matters? If we can ignore these caveats and look for a starting-point for conversation that is evidently already occupying our potential student, we won’t have much trouble going on from there.

Be open

Notice the second thing about Jesus’ comment: He put Himself in a dependency role with this woman. He didn’t say, “Here, let me get that for you.” He, in effect, invited *her* to engage *Him* by meeting some small but obvious need. He opened Himself to this woman, and that made all the difference.

When we launch into a teaching moment, we need to think of an opening that will engage the other person with us. Here it would be appropriate to ask a question, or perhaps to solicit an opinion on whatever our potential “student” may be thinking about or doing. Keep the focus on the other person and what they’re presently engaged in doing. Ask them to explain something. Make an affirming or complementary comment.

And then, get ready to listen, because the work of teaching will have just begun.

For reflection

1. What would you say are the skills of a truly excellent listener? Why is it important to acquire these skills?
2. Think about the day ahead of you. What can you begin doing now to help you prepare to make the most of the teaching opportunities you will surely have?
3. “What are we afraid of when it comes to initiating a teaching moment with others?” How would you answer this question? How can believers encourage one another to overcome those fears?

Next steps – Preparation: Where will you be going, and whom will you be seeing there today? Can you envision something you might ask, say, or do that could launch a conversation about spiritual things? What could keep you from doing this? How will you overcome it? Take some initiative today, then share with a Christian friend how the Lord led you in this effort.

5 Make a Connection

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." John 4.10

Teaching moments

A teaching moment begins when we – who are called to be witnesses and make disciples – discern an opportunity, under the prompting of God's Spirit, to engage a conversation with someone around us.

Not all these efforts will result in a teaching moment. But we need to initiate them anyway, if only for the purpose of developing and improving our ability to observe and move into such moments.

Further, some of the conversations we will initiate won't last very long. That's OK, too. Even though we don't get beyond the step of initiation, our doing so will create a good feeling – most of the time – in the one we're seeking to engage. He or she will come away thinking that we paid attention to them, are interested in what's of interest to them, and can talk to them courteously and in a friendly manner. That kind of opening may lead to further teaching moments later on.

Plus, each time you exercise this conversation muscle, you grow a little stronger in it, and a little more confident in your ability to be the teacher you ought to be.

Good listeners

If we are able to engage a conversation, we'll want to let it go its natural course for a while. Don't be too quick, especially with unbelievers, to rush into the Gospel. Pay careful attention to what your potential student is saying (Jms. 1.19). Ask some questions. Share an opinion. Good listeners encourage others to be active talkers, and the more a person is willing to talk with us, the more opportunities we will have for finding something to connect with and to take our conversation to the next level.

And that next level is finding some smooth way to launch the conversation into a new theater by injecting the reality of the spiritual world into the conversation.

You see how Jesus did it here. He simply mentioned that there is a "gift of God" available for any who may be interested in it. Don't miss the strategic way that Jesus made this connection between the seen and unseen realms. First, He mentioned a "gift." Who isn't interested in getting something for free, something of value that might do them some good? This is as true in our day as it has ever been.

But, second, Jesus connected the idea of a *gift* with the mention of *God*. Most surveys indicate that well over 90% of Americans still believe in God, in one way or another. Mentioning God in a conversation, while it might momentarily startle, will not be a deal-breaker. And mentioning God in the context of a gift might be doubly piquing, especially since many people don't think of God in terms of what *He gives*, but of what they suppose *we owe* Him.

So, the conversation is developing around, let's say, some current political scandal (there's usually plenty such fodder). We might say, "Do you ever wonder how God looks at our nation's politicians?" Or maybe the person is discussing some aspect of his job, which you have asked him to explain. It's easy enough to say, "I'm grateful for my work; God is certainly good to give us so many different kinds of work to do."

Alert to "launchers"

Since God is sovereign over all of life, it shouldn't be too hard for us to find a way of connecting our conversations with some aspect of God's relationship to the world.

William Wilberforce, the great 19th century social and religious reformer, was a master at this. He used to think up and write down what he called “launchers,” phrases he might use in imaginary conversations to connect a mundane moment to eternal truths.

It’s not a bad idea to practice this, if only in your head, as you watch the evening news, listen in on the conversations of others, talk with members of your family, prepare for your day in prayer, or read the daily paper or a website. Start a journal in which you write down phrases or questions that can connect the here and now with the realities of the then and there.

And don’t think you need to do this in every conversation. It must be smooth, natural, and in flow with the drift and mood of the conversation.

For example, in the middle of a conversation about favorite foods, you don’t want to say, “Well, enjoy them while you can, because God is going to judge you one day.” How much better to say something like, “Thank God for all this wonderful food!” By doing this you introduce a new perspective into the conversation and launch it up to a new plane, a plane that, as the Spirit continues to lead, you will be able to unfold more clearly as the teaching moment continues.

For reflection

1. Explain the idea of a “launcher.” Give some examples that you have used or seen others use:
2. “Since God is sovereign over all of life, it shouldn’t be too hard for us to find a way of connecting our conversations with some aspect of God’s relationship to the world.” How can we become more aware of and alert to the ways God is revealing Himself in everyday situations?
3. A certain measure of fear comes in whenever we think about “launching” a conversation to the spiritual level. Why is that? Is this justified? What do we have to fear in doing this?

Next steps – Preparation: Take five minutes right now and jot down two or three “launchers” you might use in conversation with someone today. Try one out and follow the conversation as the Spirit leads. Share with a Christian friend the results of this activity.

6 Focusing on Christ

Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." John 4:26

Command the conversation

The late Paul Little, in his excellent book, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, provided a detailed analysis of Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. I'm merely summarizing the main points of his study, which can be most helpful in learning to fulfill your calling as a teacher. One important dynamic of that situation is that Jesus commanded the teaching moment and took the conversation where He wanted to go.

We can learn to do this as well, whether we're trying to bear witness to an unsaved friend or colleague, or simply helping some Christian friend go a little deeper with the Lord. Having started the conversation, Jesus quickly proceeded to introduce the unseen realm and to direct the conversation toward a more serious consideration of spiritual matters.

And all the while, Jesus knew exactly where He was going with this conversation. Sooner or later, He would bring this teaching moment around to Himself.

The most important topic

Jesus is the most important topic, the central thread of every teaching moment. We who are learning Jesus are called to teach Jesus to others. We want unbelievers to consider Him, and we want our Christian friends to go deeper with Him.

Only Jesus can bring real meaning, purpose, direction, and life to the people we meet each day in the as-you-are-goings of our lives. So, from the beginning of our teaching moment, we need to think about ways of guiding the conversation toward the center of all things, toward Jesus.

Now, this doesn't mean that every conversation needs to be a *complete* Gospel presentation. Not at all. Just getting someone to *think* about Jesus lays down a plank on the bridge we're building that we can return to at some later time to resume our conversational journey. But it is the most loving thing that we can do to point others – saved or unsaved – to the One Who is making all things new in our lives.

Again, you won't find many people who have no respect at all for Jesus. Even the most rabid unbeliever will probably admit that, if Jesus really lived, He was a remarkable person. Adjust your point of contact with the student in your teaching moment to where he or she is, where you find them. There are plenty of things about Jesus that can begin to take that essential connection to the center. We don't always have to start with His death on the cross or second coming in order to inject the name and presence of Jesus into our conversations. Jesus' life, teaching, and works, as well as the various responses to Him by His contemporaries, provide many angles for bringing up some aspect of the Lord in a conversation. Look for a realistic connecting point, and then begin to build your conversation toward the center from there.

Your experience of Jesus

You should of course make sure to have your personal testimony ready – and ready to adjust as needed – to every situation. Even when you're talking with believers it's important to be able to keep Jesus in the focus, and you can do this by sharing something that Jesus has taught you or done in your life of late. Your unbelieving friends may not believe that Jesus has meant so much to you, or done so much for you, but no one can deny your experience when you are convinced of it.

Even pointing to a Scripture that clearly talks about Jesus can help to focus other believers on Him and what He has done in your life, and may want to do in theirs.

With unbelievers you can use your own testimony to bring Jesus into the teaching moment, provided you use a part of your testimony that will connect with the unbeliever. This might require you to spend more time in prayer each day, rehearsing your testimony with the Lord, until you see more clearly all the many good things He has done and is doing in your life.

Paul used his own personal testimony freely and often in the Book of Acts and in his epistles. He knew that only Jesus Christ can change lives, only Jesus Christ is the altogether lovely and majestic One, only Jesus Christ can command the necessary wonder and adoration that lead men to forsake their old ways of living and take up their crosses as His followers.

So the better we become at injecting Jesus into a conversation, at precisely the relevant point, the better we will be in fulfilling our callings to be witnesses and teachers for the Lord.

For reflection

1. Christians believe that Christ is the center of everything. Really? Explain:
2. Can we expect to move our conversations and other *teaching moments* toward Christ if our relationship with Him is not what it ought to be? Explain:
3. What would you say ought to be the important parts of a *testimony* about what Christ has done for us? Summarize your testimony in no more than three sentences:

Next steps – Preparation: Briefly outline your own testimony. How did you become a Christian? What difference has that made in your life? Today, ask a Christian friend to share his or her own testimony with you. If there's time, share yours. This will help you begin gaining confidence in your ability to talk about the Lord in your life.

7 A Living Classroom

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear... 1 Peter 3.15

Get our classroom right

By far and away, the most important teaching aid that you bring into any teaching moment is the example of your own life.

Peter believed that, when Christians are living out their hope, they will stand out so starkly in this shallow, fearful, and materialistic world, that others will be drawn to them in order to find out what makes them tick. Believers live in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5.1, 2). Our hope is focused on our unchanging Lord and Savior, that we might know Him, grow in Him, and live for Him unto ever increasing glory (Jn. 17.3; 2 Pet. 3.18; 1 Cor. 10.31). Such a way of life cannot help but stand out as different from what most people experience, most of the time.

School teachers spend a lot of time getting their classrooms just right – just the right pictures on the wall, books on the shelves, order of desks and chairs, and all the rest. They know how important a pleasant, stimulating, and reinforcing classroom can be. We must learn the same as well.

The starting point

Have you set Jesus Christ aside as Lord in your life? This is the starting-point both for growing in the hope of glory, and for becoming a welcoming classroom for potential students we will encounter in the as-you-are-goings of our lives.

What does this entail?

It means that you recognize that Jesus is not just your Savior; He is your King. All that we have is a gift from Him, and He intends us to use everything to further His rule and saving grace. We have acknowledged Jesus as Lord when, every day of our lives, we offer up to Him, for His use and approval, all we have, all we are, all we will do or say, and all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities, every moment and opportunity of every day.

That's a pretty tall order, I know. We're not likely to do that unless we have some hope of gaining something positive as a result of embracing such a consecrated life. What is the Christian's hope? It is, as Paul says, the hope of glory (Rom. 5.1, 2). But what does that mean?

In a day when people stake their hopes on good jobs, sufficient wealth and material possessions, reliable relationships, and a suitable amount of fun, it's no wonder hope is such an elusive commodity. Christians do not look to such things for the fullness of life, peace, joy, and meaning. They look instead to the glory of God.

That is, the Christian believes, and, increasingly experiences, the reality of God's awesome and powerful presence with him, drawing him close, granting him joy and pleasure, and filling him with the sense of eternal truths and unmerited favor (Ps. 16.11). The true follower of Jesus Christ says with the Apostle Paul, "For me to live is Christ!" (Phil. 1.21), and longs to be transformed, from glory to glory, into the very image of the Lord (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

The Christian hopes to *encounter* this glory every day in his times with the Lord, and also as the Lord makes Himself known through the glories of the creation.

But beyond that, the Christian hopes to *express* the glory of God in his words and deeds (1 Cor. 10.31), so that others are exposed to the reality of a transcendent realm and an all-loving God.

Christians long to have Christ increasing in them and making Himself known through every aspect of our lives, so that when people experience us, by word or deed, they get a little taste, a sweet fragrance, of Jesus Christ. They come into contact, that is, with His glory.

A commanding hope

When this hope commands our lives – the hope of *meeting God* in His glory and then *serving God* by expressing that glory to others – our lives will be fully furnished and warmly attractive classrooms for everyday teaching.

Don't be surprised if people begin commenting on the grace they experience in your life, or on how much they enjoy talking with you. This is what Jesus did, and when Jesus is set aside as Lord in your heart, it's what He'll do through you as well.

We are called to be witnesses for Christ and to make disciples as we are going about the normal, everyday situations of our lives. But we must be constantly preparing for these opportunities, always in communication with and submission to our gracious and powerful Lord, and ever ready to respond to the promptings of His Spirit as He leads us to initiate a teaching moment with someone else.

This is where the most important teaching of the Church goes forth. Make sure you're ready to go forth and fulfill this high and holy calling.

For reflection

1. "Have you set Jesus Christ aside as Lord in your life?" How would you counsel a new believer to do this?
2. Meditate on 2 Corinthians 3.12-18. How can we know when we are encountering the glory of the Lord? Is it possible to know this experience in our times of prayer and Bible reading or study? Explain:
3. What does it mean for you to be constantly preparing for the teaching and witnessing opportunities the Lord brings to you each day?

Next steps – Preparation: Spend some time in prayer reflecting on the "classroom" which is your life. Are there things in your life that keep others from wanting to be around you? Or from being interested in talking with you? What can you do, in all the places you go throughout the week, to make the "classroom" of your life more appealing and ready for teaching moments? Share your thoughts with a Christian friend.

Called to Teach

For reflection or discussion

1. In what sense is every true follower of Jesus called to be a teacher?
2. What can we do to prepare for the teaching moments the Lord will bring into our lives?
3. How might we expect to know that the Spirit is leading us into a teaching moment?
4. Why is your personal testimony an important tool for teaching Christ to others?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned about *your* calling to teach Christ to others? How are you implementing that lesson in your daily life?

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.