

CHAPTER 59

HOW CHRIST EDUCATED HIS DISCIPLES

1. THE EDUCATION OF THE DISCIPLES WAS UPPERMOST IN CHRIST'S MIND.

- a. More than half of His recorded words are addressed to them.
- b. Gradually and steadily His ministry resolved itself into the definite work of training the twelve.
- c. Many miracles were wrought exclusively for their instruction.
- d. One-third of the parables were addressed directly to them.
- e. The last year and a half of His ministry was spent in intensive training.
- f. Christ realized they were to be witnesses of His life and example and would later carry the gospel into all the world.

2. MOST OF THEIR EDUCATION CAME THROUGH DIRECT CONTACT AND ASSOCIATION WITH HIMSELF.

- a. They watched, observed and absorbed everything He said and did.
- b. They saw Him handle thousands of problems and little occurrences throughout His daily life.
- c. Slowly and steadily they were transformed into His likeness.
- d. They listened to His teachings and absorbed His values.
- e. Like the slow process of nature they came to act, believe and think as He did.
- f. Through association and companionship they received vital training.

3. CHRIST'S EYE WAS NEVER OFF THE DISCIPLES — HE WAS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A POINT.

- a. To correct a misconception.
- b. To rehearse a lesson forgotten.
- c. To point it out and clarify the erroneous thinking of the religious leaders of their day.
- d. To explain His actions if the disciples were ever in doubt.

4. CHRIST BELIEVED IN HIS DISCIPLES AND MADE THEM FEEL CONFIDENT THEY WOULD SUCCEED.

- a. He expressed belief in their abilities and assured them they would make good.
- b. He knew their doubts and anxieties because of their lack of formal education and experience.
- c. Yet, He communicated to them the feeling He would help them and see them through to the end.

5. HE ASKED QUESTIONS AND ENCOURAGED FEEDBACK AND INTERCHANGE.

- a. This approach disclosed His constant interest in the disciples' progress.
- b. It also shook them out of lethargic habits of mind and made them think for themselves.
- c. This type of question-and-answer interchange is one of the most powerful means of teaching.
- d. It reveals the weak spots in understanding, as well as reinforces the strong.

6. CHRIST DESIRED THAT THEY ASK HIM QUESTIONS.

- a. When the disciples were still in doubt, He wanted to know so that He could more completely ground them in truth.
- b. Quite a considerable portion of the gospels is occupied with their queries and Jesus' explanations.
- c. He never reacted in anger or with impatience whenever they grilled Him in unclear areas or inquired about something they didn't comprehend.

7. JESUS TAUGHT THEM HOW TO THINK AND OBSERVE ACCURATELY.

- a. This was one of His great hallmarks as a teacher — He caused them to look below the surface and think things out.
- b. He urged them to question current-day opinions and ideas and never to accept so-called truth on mere assumptions.
- c. He taught them how to reason, how to investigate and how to test all present forms of thought in pursuit of truth.

8. HE NEVER INDULGED IN ABUSIVE SPEECH OR SARCASM.

- a. He treated them as mature adults and guarded against intimidation that would have shaken their confidence.
- b. He held their self-respect and dignity in highest esteem.
- c. Christ knew that to ridicule them would be fatal to their education.
- d. He did express disappointment at times which implied that He expected better things of them.
- e. But He never showed signs of impatience or scorn for their incapacity, just the disappointment of a teacher whose scholars aren't doing their best, who knows they can do better if they can only try harder.
- f. When called for, Christ openly rebuked them for presumptuous or other sins hurtful to their character.

9. CHRIST ENCOURAGED REST AFTER DIFFICULT AND LENGTHY SESSIONS TO LET THE LESSONS SINK IN.

- a. All good teachers know that the time of rest that follows a period in which new matter has been taken into the mind is vital and necessary for mental development.
- b. Conceptions then become more clear and complete and solidifies a sure lodgement in the mind.
- c. Thus, He tried to avoid distractions before His ideas had time to root.
- d. The Bible implies that Christ took the disciples away for a rest after strenuous work and much teaching.

10. CHRIST ENCOURAGED THE DISCIPLES TO BE THEMSELVES AND TO RETAIN THEIR INDIVIDUALITY.

- a. He did not make them copies after one pattern.
- b. That which was native to each man and marked him off from all others He carefully preserved.
- c. He intensified in each disciple the desire to develop his own personality and to follow with vigor his own natural gifts.

11. HE INSTILLED IN EACH MAN A DEEP SENSE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

- a. One of Christ's great principles — always present — was His carefulness to keep alive in each disciple a deep sense of responsibility.
- b. He taught them to guard against every defect, for their own followers would copy them — faults and all.

12. CHRIST USED 'PROGRESSIVE ASSIMILATION' AS AN ADVANCED FORM OF TEACHING.

- a. This is called the 'experimental method' or giving them greater challenges as they were able to receive them.
- b. Something was proposed which they had to solve for themselves.
- c. A deep mystery, or a parable arrested their attention — they were asked to solve it.
- d. Christ taxed their faculties to the utmost.
- e. He knew that a problem thought out and solved was better for their development in their later stages of training than giving the answer ready-made.
- f. In following this procedure of 'progressive assimilation' He was preparing His disciples to face virtually any challenge the devil and the world may hurl at them.

13. THEY LEARNED BY DOING.

- a. Christ didn't do everything for the disciples, but left something for them to do themselves.
- b. They weren't to be just spoon-fed throughout their training or mere passive recipients of His teaching.
- c. They were to go out and take part with Him in the very Work itself.
- d. They must now put to use the knowledge they had learned and bear the brunt of responsibility.
- e. Effective teaching never stops with theory; it goes on into training and practice.
- f. In the case of Christ's disciples, He moved them steadily along these two paths.

14. CHRIST ALWAYS HAD IN MIND THEIR MISSION AFTER HIS DEATH.

- a. Their training must be thorough and complete.
- b. No stone must be left unturned until they were ably qualified and prepared to enter their calling.
- c. Christ covered all the essentials so that His men were fully ready and able.
- d. They knew what to do and were confident, with God's help, they could do it.
- e. The only thing lacking was God's Spirit, which they would receive within a few days.
- f. With this last ingredient, they would now go forth with might and power and shake the world.