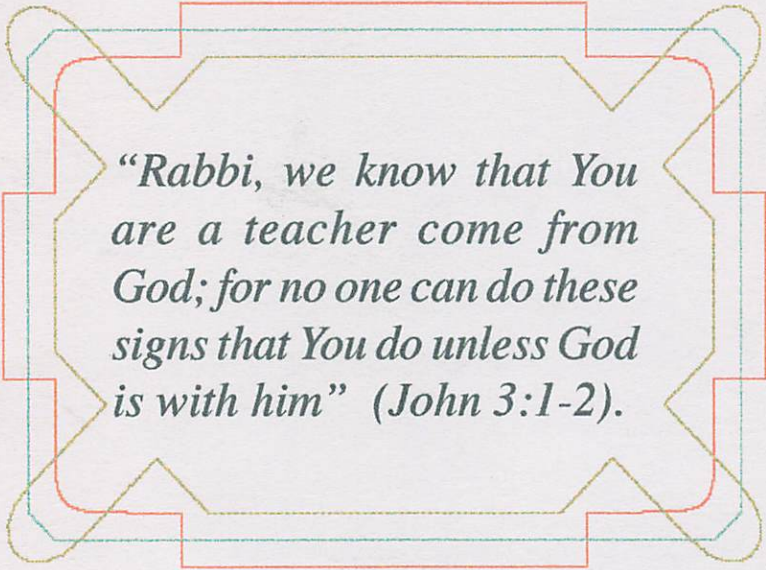


THE TEACHER

Of All Teachers



*“Rabbi, we know that You
are a teacher come from
God; for no one can do these
signs that You do unless God
is with him” (John 3:1-2).*

Benny B. Bristow

The Teacher of All Teachers

Many who are successful in all endeavors of life, have done so by following a model. It may be a relative, a friend, or someone who is a master in their field. God has created us in a way that we can be motivated and influenced by others. This is a blessing that many of us have overlooked.

It would be difficult to find someone in Christianity who has not been impressed by the apostle Paul. From the time of Paul's conversion, it seems that he "hit the ground running" for the Lord. He preached, he taught, he wrote, and he traveled for Jesus. How could anyone on earth ever fathom the depth of his influence as he spread the gospel to the world?

It Is No Secret

Someone might ask, "What was the secret of Paul's success?" You can be assured that the power behind his success was not a secret! In fact, in his teaching and writing, he wanted all to know that the reason for his success was Jesus.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

What was Paul saying in these and many other verses? He was saying, "I owe ALL to Jesus the Teacher of all teachers!"

A Nighttime Visit

When Nicodemus paid Jesus a nighttime visit, he got down immediately to business. He said, "*Rabbi, we know that You are a*

teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2).

What did Nicodemus mean by calling Jesus Rabbi? He was calling Him the Teacher of all teachers. For not only was Jesus masterful in teaching, but He proved Himself as being from God by the miracles He performed.

How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus? By teaching one of the most powerful lessons of His ministry. He taught him about the new birth of water and the Spirit as being essential to enter the kingdom of God, and gave a comparison between fleshly and spiritual births illustrated by the wind. He also taught him about the love and purpose of God who sent His Son to earth to die—which is the central truth of God’s will.

Motivated A Better Life

The ministry of Jesus is filled with teaching that motivated a better life. How could anyone read and study His sermon from the mountain and not say: *“No man ever spoke like this Man!” (John 7:46).*

Paul knew the power and influence of this Teacher of all teachers, and wanted Him to continually be his personal model.

Teachers Today

What about teachers in the church today? Has the need to follow the example of Jesus changed? Certainly it has not! If we could combine and follow ALL the religious leaders of the past along with their human creeds, this would be nothing compared to following Jesus. This Teacher of all teachers, *“taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:29).* Even in His hometown of Nazareth, they marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. And they asked, *“Is this not Joseph's son?” (Luke 4:22).*

This should lead us to ask, “What characteristics did Jesus have that made Him the Teacher of all teachers? If we will study and follow His ways and actions, we will also become better teachers. Therefore, may we consider some of the characteristics of Jesus that

made Him the Teacher of all teachers.

* He Taught His Father's Will

Even though Jesus was one of the persons in the Godhead and made all things in the beginning (*John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16*), He had become flesh to show *"the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (*John 1:14*). Therefore, He lived and taught daily the will of His Father. *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me"* (*John 6:38*).

Jesus placed Himself under the directions of His Father as an obedient Son in His teaching and in His suffering: *"though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered"* (*Hebrews 5:8*).

Jesus wanted His audiences to know that He was not promoting Himself, and was not just a teacher giving His own opinions. His teaching and judgments represented the will of His Father. *"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me"* (*John 5:30*).

Jesus did what He saw His Father do. *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner"* (*John 5:19*).

As Jesus carried out His mission on earth *"to seek and to save that which was lost"* (*Luke 19:10*), He always glorified His Father. When His work finally came down to the garden and the cross, He told His Father in prayer, *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do"* (*John 17:4*).

Following His Example

How will we act as teachers if we follow the example of the Teacher of all teachers? Can we seek anything less than what Jesus sought? How could anyone believe that God is pleased with them

as teachers, when they are teaching the doctrines and commandments of men? Jesus taught that such teaching causes even their worship to be in vain. *“And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).*

Therefore, we need to be teachers of the Book—seekers of God’s will. Both teachers and the ones being taught will be judged by the word that comes from God. Jesus said of His teaching, *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).*

When Jesus sent the seventy out to teach, He told them, *“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).*

He taught that false teachers are blind leaders of the blind, and said that all will fall into the ditch *(Matthew 15:14).*

Teachers who are true to God (like Jesus) will guide their students to do God’s will. Why? Because this is the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven. *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).*

As true teachers, our goal will always be to teach the will of our Father.

✱ He Lived What He Taught

It can be said of Jesus the Teacher of all teachers, that “Never a man lived like this Man.” This fact was the most difficult thing for the enemies of Jesus to face. They devoted most of their time and energy, just to find one flaw in His life and character, but they failed. For Jesus NEVER committed a sin *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).*

The devil with all of his power of evil and darkness, must have thought he had a chance to succeed with Jesus, but he was wrong! The temptations bounced away from Jesus like sparks flying from a burning fire. For Jesus responded to each temptation with a Scrip-

ture. Finally, when Jesus said, *“Get behind Me, Satan!”* (Luke 4:8), he left Him. The devil had experienced the greatest failure in his existence.

Therefore, when Jesus taught love, He practiced it. When He taught forgiveness, He forgave. When He taught loving one’s enemies, He died for His. When He taught others how to pray, He poured out His heart to His Father in prayer. Jesus lived what He taught!

How Do We Compare?

As Bible teachers, how much effort do we put forth to live what we teach? Do we experience failure because our students do not see us live the things we teach? It is true that we cannot live without sinning as Jesus lived. However, we need to ask ourselves, *“Are we trying our best to follow the example of His life?”*

Imagine a little boy trying to walk in the footprints that his dad has made in the snow. He tries so hard, but occasionally he steps to one side. Does he give up? No, but with even greater determination, he tries to follow his steps.

This kind of effort is what pleases the Teacher of all teachers! He wants us to give the best effort that we can possibly give.

The price for being a Christian and a Christian teacher does not come cheap. We must set aside self and the fleshly practices of our bodies mentioned Paul to the Galatians (*Galatians 5:19-21*).

Jesus taught, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”* (Matthew 16:24).

What About Paul?

As Paul followed Jesus and taught the gospel to the world, he had to practice discipline daily. *“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9:27). Like Jesus, Paul was falsely accused of sinning on various occasions during his ministry. However, he just continued on with faithful living and serving the One who was crucified for him (1 Timothy 2:16).

Thus, before we can be successful teachers, we must set

forth the example of what we are teaching by the way we live.

✱ He Was Not Afraid To Work

One cannot study the actions of the Teacher of all teachers without seeing Him as a man at work. The parents of Jesus recognized this very early in His life. When Joseph and Mary left Him in Jerusalem thinking He was with some of the relatives, they returned to find Him among the doctors listening and asking questions. How did He defend His actions to His mother? *“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”* (Luke 2:49).

From this early age of twelve until He returned to His Father, this Teacher of all teachers was at work. In fact, Jesus taught that His Father in heaven sent Him on a working mission. *“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working”* (John 5:17).

One day the disciples were concerned that Jesus was not eating enough food. *“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work’* “ (John 4:34).

Jesus did not work just because He was taught to work by Joseph and Mary, but He was motivated by His Father in heaven. *“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4).

Shortly before Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed these words to His Father: *“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do”* (John 17:4). Jesus had been at work! Perhaps it would stagger our imaginations if we knew the exact number of hours that Jesus gave to teaching during His few years upon this earth.

Personal Soul Searching

This should lead us as teachers to do some personal soul searching. How much time are we investing to be more effective Bible teachers? Are we at work for our Father, or are we working most of our hours for ourselves? Yes, many hours must be given to sustaining our physical lives, but we must remember that all of these

things are temporary. However, the work we invest in teaching God's word is eternal. The students whom we teach have eternal souls made in the image of God (*Genesis 1:26,27*), and all need to obey and live for Jesus. He is the ONLY author of eternal salvation, and will give salvation ONLY to those who obey Him (*Hebrews 5:9*).

Therefore, the work that we invest in to be better teachers of eternal things, is the best investment that we can make. This is true with ourselves and with the ones we teach. Remember, this is a work that pays the highest dividends! *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

The fact is, if we want to be better teachers and to please the Teacher of all teachers, we must roll up our sleeves and get involved in work.

✱ He Prayed Often To His Father

Among all the things that Jesus loved while living upon this earth, one of them must have been to talk to His Father in heaven. Before becoming flesh and dwelling upon this earth, He knew the riches and glories of being in heaven with His Father. Who can deny that Jesus began and ended His mission on earth with sacrifices. It began when He left heaven, and ended when He was sacrificed on the cross.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

What was the one thing that sustained Jesus as He carried out His work among sinful man? It must have been the prayers He had with His Father. Jesus was one with His Father, therefore, they were one in purpose. *"I and My Father are one" (John 10:30).* Prayer was so important that He make special efforts to pray.

There were important things that followed these special times of prayers to His Father. Luke records that after praying all night, He chose His disciples (*Luke 6:12,13*). After praying by Himself,

He went to His disciples walking on the water (*Matthew 14:23-25*). The beautiful and powerful transfiguration took place when Jesus went with Peter, John, and James “*up on the mountain to pray*” (*Luke 9:28*). The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus followed His “*exceedingly sorrowful, even to death*” prayers in Gethsemane (*Matthew 14:34*). Just before breathing His last breath in death, Jesus prayed, “*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.*” Having said this, He *breathed His last*” (*Luke 23:46*).

Therefore, we can say of Jesus that He lived by prayer, and taught His followers to do the same. He taught a parable about a judge and widow, to emphasize how “*that men always ought to pray and not lose heart*” (*Luke 18:1*). He also taught His disciples the importance of praying with faith.

“*Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*” (*Mark 11:24*).

How can we become teachers who are seeking to be like the Teacher of all teachers, without daily praying sincere prayers? The preachers, teachers, and leaders of the early church, did their work teaching and serving with prayer.

Paul gives two statements about the importance of prayer that sums up their lives of prayer. “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*” (*Philippians 4:6*). “*pray without ceasing*” (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

As we prepare our lessons to teach God’s word, how much time do we give to prayer? Does our faith become so small that we feel that we can teach without God? Do we sometimes forget that we have been given an eternal assignment to teach?

If we must admit a weakness in our prayer life as teachers, it is time to look at the praying Teacher of all teachers. Then we can earnestly pursue the power of prayer as we teach.

✱ He Boldly Spoke The Truth

We should not be surprised to learn that the Son of God boldly

spoke the truth. In fact, truth, in every sense of the word, is associated with God. Thus, Jesus could say to His apostles, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).*

To appreciate this great Teacher of truth even more, we have only to compare the devil and his lies. The devil lives to lie and deceive, but Jesus taught the truth about him. To those Jews who sought to kill Him, Jesus said, *“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).*

Therefore, the devil binds with lies, and Jesus sets free with truth. Jesus also taught that those who followed Him must always tell the truth. Instead of swearing so that others would believe them, Jesus said, *“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37).*

Two Ways To Speak Truth

There were two ways in which Jesus spoke truth. First of all, He never told a lie, and all of His promises were true.

The world is filled with liars, and unfortunately, some who call themselves Christians have lying tongues. However, the word of God (in all ages) reveals how God feels about the awfulness of lying. When Solomon named seven things that are an abomination to the Lord, the second one mentioned was *“a lying tongue” (Proverbs 6:16,17).*

The apostle John records a list of awful sinners who will not be in heaven. After reaching the end of the list, he writes: *“and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).*

The second way that Jesus spoke the truth was by who He was and His spiritual message. In His prayer for His disciples before He faced the cross, Jesus prayed: *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17).*

Therefore, the full embodiment of His message was the way

of truth. He came to provide the way for sinful man to be reconciled to God. So, because of this, He could say of Himself: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). Thus, those who reject Jesus the truth, and His message of truth, cut themselves off from the Father.

An Eternal Sacrifice

Jesus came to earth to provide the blood necessary to enter the Holiest of All. The temple under the Old Testament, with its Holy and Most Holy places, was fulfilled in its purpose as Jesus brought forth a better way. The Hebrew writer reveals these words about Jesus:

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Only those who accepted and lived this truth could be His disciples. Jesus, the Teacher of all teachers, taught: *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31-32).

The law of Moses could not provide true freedom nor permanent forgiveness of sins, because there was the need for the grace of God. However, Jesus the way, provided this grace: *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17).

Therefore, as we teach, we must have before us always, Jesus the truth, and never pervert the truth of God's word. Only then can we be like the Teacher of all teachers!

* He Illustrated His Lessons

Not only was the message that Jesus taught backed up by God's will, authority, grace, and truth, but He also taught His message in a way that captured the attention of His audience. There is one thing (among many others) that can always be truthfully said about Jesus. "He was never boring." Even those who hated Him and worked daily to destroy His influence, were captivated by His teaching. In fact, they feared the influence that He had with the people.

After the Pharisees set a trap for Him and failed, we find: *“When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way” (Matthew 22:22).*

When Jesus joined His words with His miracles, the audiences were amazed. There were many things that caused the multitudes to follow Him as He taught. However, there was one thing in particular that made this Teacher of all teachers so successful. He illustrated His message by nature and the happenings of their daily lives.

He pointed to the lilies of the field as He taught them about avoiding worry (*Matthew 6:28-30*). He taught about the shepherd and his sheep to emphasize that He is the door of the sheep and the good shepherd (*John 10:1-18*). He used the vineyard to teach that He is the vine and His disciples the branches (*John 15:1-8*). He taught about a plentiful harvest to relate that more laborers are needed (*Matthew 9:37,38*). He taught about salt and light to show the importance of having a positive influence (*Matthew 5:13-16*).

This Teacher of all teachers taught about two roads or ways—one is narrow and the other one is wide, to show the destiny of all humanity (*Matthew 7:13,14*). Jesus told them about a successful farmer who wanted to build new barns, to show that death can come at any time, and all without God, will be lost (*Luke 12:13-21*).

He spoke of a sower who sowed seed in different kinds of soils, to illustrate the word being taught to different kinds of hearts (*Matthew 13:3-9,18-23*). He used the tiny mustard seed, to show the power of faith and the growth of the kingdom (*Matthew 13:31; Luke 13:19*). This is only a partial list, because He used many other things in their lives as He taught spiritual lessons.

The Teacher of all teachers began with things of which they were familiar, and moved into the unknown. In His parables, He first told a familiar story, and then placed beside it the spiritual lessons. By comparing the two, He taught them the mysteries of the kingdom that are either revealed or hidden.

“He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given’” (Matthew 13:11).

What about our teaching today? Do we seek this successful method used by Jesus? Do we take the time to plan illustrations, stories, visuals, and objects to explain the word of God? The TV world visualizes most of its messages in full color. Could this be one of the reasons they have captivated this and other nations?

A Bored Heart Will Not Learn

We need to remember that a heart that is bored will not learn! It is vitally important for teachers to capture and hold the interest of our students, because this is the only way they will learn.

It is not enough to say, "Well, I covered the lesson." This is important, but as we cover the material in the lesson, we must instruct and motivate their hearts to change. The Teacher of all Teachers took people from where they were, and moved them to where they needed to be!

Closer To God?

How do we compare? From our teaching, do our students become closer to God? Will they be stronger to say no to the many temptations in their lives?

Jesus taught to move people, to change their hearts, to prepare them for His kingdom, and to give them eternal life.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He succeeded in His purpose by illustrating His teaching.

* He Loved His Students

One cannot study the life of the Teacher of all teachers without seeing that He had love for His students. The leading force that motivated Jesus to daily climb the hills and mountains of Palestine was love—love for His Father and love for lost souls.

In one of His teaching sessions, a lawyer asked Him, "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*" Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your*

soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets' " (Matthew 22:36-40).

Jesus always associated love with those who obeyed Him. He taught: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Then He reversed the order and said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

The Way To Show Love

Therefore, we should teach all of our students to love God, and keep the commandments of Jesus and His Father. Those who teach that keeping commandments is not important are false, and are teaching that love is not important. For this Teacher of all teachers, let it be known that loving Him and keeping His word will bring them both Jesus and His Father.

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23; cf. 14:21).

Jesus loved His Father (John 14:31), and He also taught His disciples to love Him. He prayed: "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

Loving One Another

Among the many lessons that Jesus taught His disciples, was the importance of loving one another. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). How much did Jesus love them and all who were lost in the world? "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

It was almost time for Jesus to leave His disciples, but He wanted to leave something special with them. Thus, He said:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John

13:34).

How important was this love for one another? This would be the way that they would show the world that they belong to Jesus.

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Teaching Love

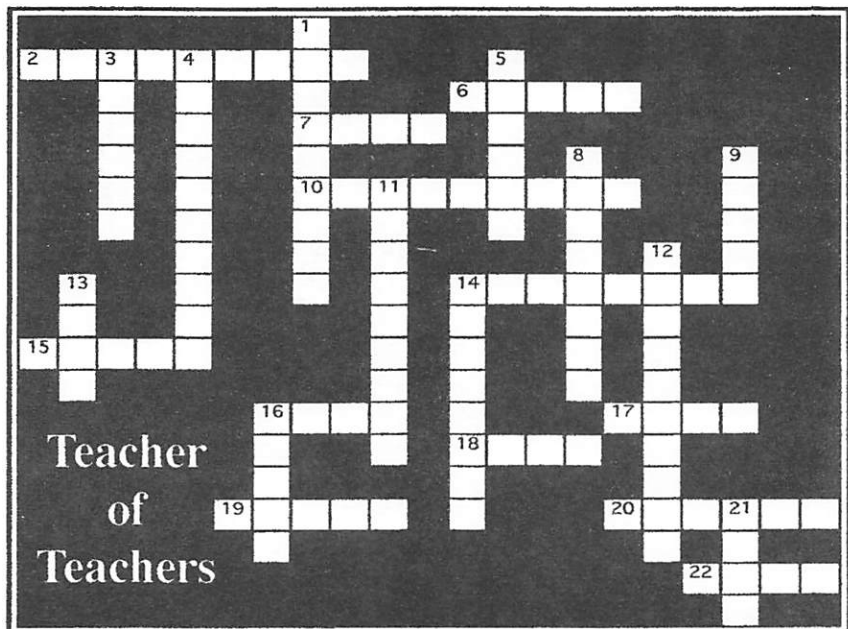
We can never be like the Teacher of all teachers until we learn to teach love! In fact, the whole purpose and message of Jesus is beautifully wrapped in the heavenly gift of love. When we fail to teach love, we fail to teach Jesus. Therefore, I commend to all teachers the words of Jesus:

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love” (John 15:9).

In one of His final teaching sessions with His disciples before returning to His Father, Jesus asked Peter three times, *“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”* Each time Peter answered, *“Yes, Lord; You know I love you.”* On the third answer, Peter was grieved that He had asked this question three times. Thus, Peter added, *“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You” (John 21:15-17).*

Everlasting Influence

What an impact this Teacher of all teachers had upon Peter and the others whom He taught! The greatest success of this powerful Teacher is found in the fruit that was produced



Teacher
of
Teachers

ACROSS

- 2 A nighttime visitor (*John 3:1,2*)
- 6 A word meaning "Teacher of all teachers" (*John 3:2*)
- 7 A word to describe Jesus as a Priest (*Heb. 4:1 5*)
- 10 A word describing the judgment of Jesus (*John 5:30*)
- 14 A place to pray (*Lk. 9:28*)
- 15 One of two things in which Jesus was filled (*John 1:14*)
- 16 A word associated with God and one's neighbor (*Mt. 22:36-40*)
- 17 Something of the Father that is essential to enter the kingdom (*Mt. 7:21*)
- 18 That which Jesus brought (*John 10:10*)
- 19 A word that identifies Jesus (*John 14:6*)
- 20 The place from where Jesus had come (*John 6:38*)
- 22 Jesus was this before leaving heaven (*2 Cor. 8:9*).

DOWN

- 1 The way Jesus taught (*Mt. 7:29*)
- 3 The One through whom Paul could do all things (*Philippians 4:13*)
- 4 Something that Paul did to his body (*1 Cor. 9:27*)
- 5 A person in the Godhead to whom all should give thanks (*Col. 3:17*)
- 8 Something that Jesus did that was associated with His Father (*Lk 2:49*)
- 9 Someone commanded to get behind Jesus (*Lk. 4:8*)
- 11 That which Jesus had done for His Father while on earth (*John 17:4*)
- 12 A word in the past tense associated with truth (*John 17:17*)
- 13 Something of Jesus that will judge in the last day (*John 12:48*)
- 14 That which the Pharisees did when they heard the words of Jesus (*Mt. 22:22*)
- 16 Those who are destined for a lake of fire (*Rev. 21:8*)
- 21 The way worshipping with doctrines of men are described (*Mt. 15:9*).