

AN ANALYSIS OF CHRIST'S TEACHING METHODS
AS USED WITH VARIOUS AUDIENCES

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Christian teacher faces many concerns as he prepares to teach effectively God's Word. For example, he must choose lesson material, determine how to divide rightly the Scripture, and make modern applications. Most importantly, the Christian teacher must strive to follow Christ's example in teaching.

How did Christ teach? What methods did He use? Volumes have been written on the pedagogy of Christ – and justifiably so. Yet in those volumes very little indicates how, if at all, Christ's teaching methods varied with His audience. Did He teach the common man using the same methods by which He taught the Pharisees? Did He instruct the Twelve and the inquisitive bystanders in the same manner? Did Christ use different teaching methods as He attempted to teach various types of audiences?

This is no small question. Nor is it one which the twentieth-century teacher should discount as "theologically irrelevant." The teacher confronts various types of students, each different from his other students. If Christ favored particular teaching methods with certain types of people, this would provide helpful insight for the teacher of today as he strives to teach effectively. Therefore this study will analyze

the teaching of Christ to determine which, if any, teaching methods He preferred with various audience types.

Definition of Terms

Teaching Methods - Teaching methods are the words, objects, actions, or other means one uses to instruct. This study will limit its examination to teaching methods used during the time between Christ's baptism and His arrest in Gethsemane. In each teaching situation emphasis will be upon the principal method or methods He used.

Audience - The audience is the particular group to whom the instructor focuses his teaching in a given instance. While Christ's audiences could be categorized by numerous criteria, this study will use commitment to God as the basis for its division of audiences.

Method of Investigation

To determine if Christ favored particular teaching methods with certain audiences and, if so, what they were, this study will pursue the following method of investigation.

First, it will examine the teaching methods Christ utilized. The Gospel account will be examined, based upon Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels.¹ Specific teaching methods will be determined with an attempt to organize these methods into general categories.

¹ A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922).

This examination will also include a study of the characteristics of the teaching methods Jesus used. This will be accomplished by an examination of literature discussing those various methods. The purpose of this is to attempt to understand the reasons He made His selections as He did.

The ministry of Christ will be divided into six-month periods in order to determine the possible effect time may have had upon the teaching method He chose. This division will be based upon a comparison of Robertson's harmony and Bill Hovey's time chart as given in the back of the Ryrie Study Bible.² The first division will begin with the Feast of Tabernacles which occurred at the time of Christ's baptism. That period will continue until the end of the Passover. The next one will begin at that point and end at the next Tabernacles. This cycle will continue until the Passover of Christ's death, providing a total of seven time periods.

Second, it will examine the people Christ taught. This will include categorizing His audiences based on their commitment to God. These categories are the noncommitted, the inquirer, the wrongly committed, and the truly committed. Characteristics of each audience will be considered in order to understand how that may have affected Christ's choice of teaching methods.

² Bill Hovey, "The Ministry of Jesus Christ" (n.p.: Joe Cooper and Bill Hovey, 1975), cited by Charles Caldwell Ryrie, The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), n.p.

Occasionally the narrative provides very little descriptive information about a given audience. If the available information is inadequate to determine the commitment of the audience that teaching situation will not be considered in this study.

Third, it will analyze how Christ taught each of the four audience groups mentioned above. It will also analyze how He taught audiences composed of a mixture of the above groups. This will be accomplished by examining the four Gospels to determine the teaching situations of Jesus. In this study a teaching situation is the setting in which a single lesson is given. This may be as short as a sentence or as lengthy as a few chapters.

Each situation will be examined to decide which teaching methods are used. The emphasis of this study is to determine what methods are used in each situation instead of the number of teaching methods used. Therefore, in each situation the number of uses of a given method will not be considered. Deciding which methods are used is the sole aim of this examination.

Organization of the Thesis

The design of this paper will closely follow the method of study used in the research.

Chapter one will be introductory. The statement of the problem, importance of the study, goal of the study, definition of terms, method of investigation, and organization of the thesis will form this chapter.

Chapter two will examine the various teaching methods of Christ. Chapter three will survey the audiences of Christ, categorized by their commitment to God.

Chapter four will analyze the methods Christ used with each group. Attempts will be made to find any preferred methods He may have employed with each of the groups.

Chapter five will summarize the findings and suggest applications for the modern Bible teacher.

CHAPTER 2

Teaching Methods Used by Christ

As Jesus encountered the many audiences He taught, He had to decide by what methods He should teach them. There were many methods from which to choose. Each had its own strengths and weaknesses. Each had characteristics which made it more beneficial to one type of student than it was to another. Why did He choose the methods He used with each particular audience?

The teaching methods Christ employed varied in many aspects. The nature of student participation (active or passive) is the aspect upon which this study bases its major divisions.

Methods Not Requiring Active Student Participation

Some of the methods in Jesus' teaching required no active participation by the student during the course of the lesson. The various types of nonparticipatory methods include the following.

The discourse, or lecture, is the oral instruction directed by the teacher toward the pupil. It is given in plain, non-figurative language. Discourse provides some benefits which are not easily attainable with other methods.

One advantage is the amount of information that can be covered. The lecture gives the teacher the ability to share

much more material in the time available. Comprehensive lessons can be given without requiring large quantities of time.

The discourse serves well to present new information. The teacher has the opportunity to share information with the student that the pupil might not have the background or necessary knowledge to learn by other methods. The teacher, with greater resources, can share knowledge through lecture that the pupil does not have the means to obtain in another way.¹ In addition, the discourse affords the teacher the power to control the learning situation. The teacher controls not only the lesson content, but also the direction the lesson flows. Greater ability to guide the thinking of the learner toward the aim of the lesson is another element of the lecture's ability to control. This helps the student avoid misunderstanding or misapplying the lesson material.

Certain situations, such as large audiences or more formal settings, do not lend themselves to many methods but are ideal for the teacher who chooses to lecture.

Another advantage of this method is that it projects the personality of the teacher well.² In view of the fact that students apply lesson material best when they emulate a teacher whom they admire this becomes significant.

¹ Findley B. Edge, Helping the Teacher (Nashville: Broadman, 1959), pp. 105-6.

² C. B. Eavey, Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), p. 273.

The lecture method is also readily adaptable for use with most other teaching methods. For example, the teacher may wish to expound the lesson material through lecture and then have a discussion about its implications. Parables (figurative teaching) may be interspersed throughout the lecture to good effect. The skilled teacher can also couple lecture with most other teaching methods.

As just shown, the discourse enjoys some great advantages. But it also carries some notable disadvantages. Of all teaching methods the lecture provides for the least amount of participation by the pupil. Since greater learning and retention usually accompany greater involvement,³ the lack of that involvement implies poorer learning.

Closely associated with the lack of participation is the tendency for attention to stray. Faulty use of the lecture often intensifies the problem of a low attention level.

The lecture succeeds with only a relatively narrow range of interest or intelligence levels in the audience. Thus less margin exists for adjustment to the level and needs of the individual students. Though an illustrative method may easily touch a wide variety of people, the lecture must target the average student without meeting the needs of advanced pupils on the one hand or of inferior students on the other.

Consideration must also be given to the fact that lecture packs much more information into a given amount of time. This

³ Eavey, pp. 277-278.

requires the student to spend more time accumulating information and allows less time for understanding and applying it.

Having noticed the advantages and disadvantages of the discourse, attention will now focus on what type of student would most benefit from this method of instruction.

A student who is already motivated to learn would profit from a lecture. Unlike the disinterested pupil, who would quickly lose attention and therefore gain little, the motivated pupil is waiting for instruction. This instruction can be given faster and more completely through the discourse.

The lecture should be reserved for students with adequate knowledge and experience to understand the lesson material. Non-illustrated truths are more difficult to grasp when the learner has no concept of the necessary background knowledge.

As previously stated, this method affords great control for the teacher. This control can prove helpful when teaching students who tend to stray from the lesson. With the lecture the teacher can control either the student who tends to wander inadvertently or the one who tries to distract from the lesson material.

The parable is the most widely known teaching method that Jesus employed. Parable translates the Greek word parabole. This is a compound word which literally means "a placing . . . by the side of"⁴ and implies "a placing beside, a comparison . . . an illustration of one subject

⁴ Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 479.

by another."⁵ In this teaching method unknown truths are illustrated and explained by familiar routines of life.

Many forms of figurative speech differ somewhat from the parable proper, but this study does not make such minute distinctions. Parable is used in this paper in its broad sense, as given by Colin Brown:

In discussing the character of the parable, scholars distinguish the parable proper from figurative language in general, metaphors, similes and similitudes, parabolic stories, illustrative stories, and allegories. These seven categories are all linked to parabole.⁶

In this study parable refers to that form of teaching by which an unknown abstraction is taught by comparison with a hypothetical story or comparative statement.

Consideration is now given to the characteristics of the parabolic method of teaching. What properties make the parable a good teaching tool?

Built into the very meaning of the word is the idea of illustration. The concept being taught is placed beside a similar concept which is already understood. Then, by comparison, either by the words of the instructor or in the mind of the pupil, the known gives meaning to the unknown.

Furthermore, symbolism in parables allows those who are interested a means of more knowledge, while it hides the lesson

⁵ John M'Clintock and James Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, VII (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), p. 643.

⁶ Colin Brown, ed., New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 743.

from those who have closed their minds to the truth. Christ Himself stated this as one reason He taught in parables (Mark 4:10-12).

Another advantage is that the parable allows the lesson to be retained until a time when the learner is better able to understand it. The teacher can "store" in a parable knowledge which the student will need at a later time but cannot comprehend at the present. The parable, with its kernel of truth buried inside, remains in the mind until the student has reached the proper level of maturity to understand its meaning.

Another advantage of this method of teaching is that it allows the mind to make a judgment without bias from the application which is to be made. Nathan's parable to David (II Samuel 12:1-12) exemplifies this principle. David pronounced judgment before he understood that the message applied to him.

This principle was especially relevant for the Jewish audience. Parables had a ". . . special attraction for the peoples of the East, with whom the imagination is quicker and more active than the logical faculty."⁷ Thus the parable drew the imagination to a conclusion before the logic could defend against the application of the lesson being taught.

The parable offers not only many advantages but also a few disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is that more time is

⁷ Herbert Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963) p. 9, citing Principal Salmonds, The Parables of Our Lord (Edinburg: T. and T. Clark, 1893), n.p.

required to cover less material. This would slow down the motivated learner if he is able to grasp the concept of the lesson without the illustrations of the parable.

The parable's ability to draw attention may sometimes be counterproductive. The student can get lost in the illustration and miss the lesson which it is intended to explain.

Little effort is required by the student when using this method. Constant instruction by the parable could lead the student to believe there is no work in understanding the word of God. Then when faced with the task of "digging out" truth for himself the student may consider the task beyond his capability.

Who should be taught by the parable? While everyone benefits from skilled parabolic teaching certain pupils would find the parable especially profitable.

When a student lacks the proper foundation upon which to build the concepts of the lesson, the parable would prove useful. The proper illustration may provide the needed foundation upon which the teacher can build the concepts of the lesson.

The student with a short attention span also learns better through the parable. As his interest strays a story can bring his focus back to the lesson.

A quick illustration can help the motivated student grasp difficult ideas. But lengthy stories may not be the wisest use of available time with this type of learner.

The object lesson is the last teaching method to be considered under the heading of nonparticipatory methods. One

may find object lessons in many forms, from concrete objects, to various types of visual aids, to actions or events which represent certain concepts to be learned. This study defines object lessons as teaching which uses any real, and usually visible, object or action to represent a parallel concept.

Some of Christ's miracles belong in this category. As He performed His miracles, He did not teach only those who were actively involved. He also taught - through object lesson - those who were watching from nearby. Also, some of His miracles were performed upon those who exhibited no active involvement to solicit or accomplish the miracle. These miracles appear to have been done in order to show that Christ was God's messenger. Such miracles therefore qualify as object lessons.

The object lesson offers many advantages for the teacher.

One advantage is its ability to attract and focus attention. An object draws the eye to itself and away from other things which may distract from learning. While avoiding distractions, the teacher also has the students' attention upon materials related to the lesson. This provides a common point from which to begin or continue the lesson.

Object lessons, like parables, set forth a known concept to which the learner can compare an unknown concept for greater comprehension. The object lesson surpasses the parable in that it tends to give the lesson material a greater sense of reality.⁸

⁸ Edge, p. 172.

Concrete objects or activities direct the thoughts into the world of reality instead of the world of the imagination.

The object lesson provides higher student retention than instruction by words alone.⁹ This is partially due to the greater impact visual instruction makes over verbal instruction. Retention also increases because of the commonness of the objects themselves. As the student encounters the objects in his daily activities, he is reminded of the lesson.

A final advantage is the ability to adapt the object lesson for use with other methods. Generally it is at its optimum when it is a companion or support for one of the other methods.

Disadvantages of the object lesson are few, but they are weighty.

The attention directed towards the object may cause the student to miss or ignore the lesson. This is particularly true if the object or its presentation has a high degree of novelty.

When object lessons are used alone or with little explanation, the student can easily miss the application. In some cases he not only misses the point, but also attaches a wrong application to the object.

Another disadvantage is that appropriate objects for the lesson are not always readily available. An object which adequately gains attention and illustrates the truth without becoming a distraction is often difficult to find.

⁹ J. M. Price, Jesus the Teacher, rev. ed. (Nashville: Convention Press, 1981), p. 96.

Based upon its strengths and weaknesses this method should be considered for several types of students. Among these is the student who is not likely to understand the difficult concepts of the lesson. The concrete object could form a base upon which he can build understanding.

The pupil whose attention is inclined to drift from the lesson also benefits from this method. The object or action will attract the eye and help to keep the student's attention.

One advantage mentioned earlier is the increased sense of reality that is inherent with real objects and action. From this it is easy to understand how object lessons can emphasize the reality of the spoken lesson. Appropriate object lessons are ideal, therefore, for students who are reluctant to believe or accept the truths to be taught.

Sometimes a student is unable to grasp the concepts of lesson material he will need to apply at a later time. The object lesson, due to its high retention rate, is ideal for this type of student. As he thinks of the object later, even without the presence of the teacher, he can come to understand the meaning behind the object lesson.

The object lesson is also appropriate for the student who has a desire for knowledge and understanding. His desire will lead him to look beyond the object and attempt to understand the principle of the lesson.

In summary, the various strengths of the object lesson made it a viable choice for teaching any type of audience.

This concludes the examination of teaching methods whose presentation requires no active participation by the student. A few general conclusions will be drawn before attention is directed toward other methods.

Nonparticipatory methods provide a large degree of control for the teacher. He can determine the lesson materials, the direction of lesson flow, the use of available time. But what is gained in control is lost in student involvement. This is generally detrimental to providing the greatest benefits from the lesson.

Nonparticipatory teaching also allows for instructing a larger audience. Lectures, parables, and appropriate object lessons can be adapted to the large and small group alike.

Methods Requiring Active Student Participation

To what extent did Jesus actively involve His students as He taught in the various settings? By what methods did He instruct using their involvement? And why did He choose to use such methods?

To answer such questions this study will now examine Christ's teaching methods which required the active involvement of the pupil. The three such methods He used were conversation, miracles, and projects.

Conversation, or discussion, is the teaching method by which the teacher instructs through dialogue. This may occur either between him and one or more of his pupils, or between the

pupils themselves under the teacher's guidance. The question-and-answer method is included in this category.

An examination of this method indicates a number of advantages. This method creates a less formal atmosphere than some of the others. This factor contributes great value alone and also enhances some of the other benefits.

For example, the informal atmosphere enhances the level of student participation. Among the normal classroom teaching methods, discussion "necessitates activity as no other method does."¹⁰ The pupil must listen to and comprehend information given during the discussion. Mental activity is required to evaluate what he hears and adjust his understanding accordingly. He must have the creativity necessary to explain and possibly defend his own beliefs and ideas.

According to the implications of the term discussion, the student must interact with the teacher or other students. This allows the student to observe the insights and ideals of others. Tolerance for others is hereby cultivated.

Probably the biggest advantage of the discussion method is that the student is allowed to formulate his own conclusion. By determining the conclusion himself he is more likely to accept and apply it.

As with other methods the conversation method has some limitations.

¹⁰ Price, p. 115.

It can degenerate into aimless talk or arguing. The teacher must carefully direct and control the discussion to keep it on focus.

There are some potential problems with regard to the student. The probability of the student formulating a wrong conclusion is greater for the conversation method than with some other methods. Or he may lack sufficient knowledge to discuss the subject intelligently. Furthermore, all students must have a common area of knowledge when group discussion is used.

Time limitations may also prove to be a disadvantage of the conversation method. Most classroom situations do not provide the time flexibility needed. If proper conclusions are not reached during the allotted time, the student is forced to leave with questions unanswered. Depending on the amount of material covered, the student may be unwilling or unable to apply any truths from the unfinished lesson.

With the above advantages and disadvantages in mind, what type of student should be taught by this method? Price states that the discussion method requires a student who is looking for truth.¹¹ Without this desire to know and understand, this method will not work at optimum level.

The pupil must be willing to honestly determine and voice his beliefs, ideas or feelings. One who refuses to acknowledge these would not be a good participant in the conversation method.

¹¹ Price, p. 114.

The student's knowledge level must be considered. The pupil should know enough about the subject to have an opinion or be able to converse about it.

Another important consideration is the student's open-mindedness. Is he capable of objectively considering the viewpoint of others? Is he willing to work toward a common conclusion with the teacher or other students? If so, the discussion method may be the teacher's best choice to instruct him.

The miracle was as much a trademark of Christ's teaching as the parable. In this study the miracle is defined as the special intervention of God to accomplish a perceivable event which lies beyond the normal processes of nature, with that intervention being implemented by the proper participation of the student.

But, as explained in the section on the object lesson, this study has made a distinction between types of teaching methods which used miraculous events. Those lessons which depended on the participation of the student are categorized as miracles. Miraculous events whose presentation did not require the active participation of the student are classified as object lessons. The two types of miracles are not mutually exclusive. The same miracle might require active participation for one student and therefore be classified as a miracle, and still be considered as an object lesson for the onlookers.

As the discussion method is based upon the learner's ability to converse, so the miracle focuses on a particular aspect of the student's participation – his faith. Some of Christ's miracles recognized an established faith, while some responded to new faith. But all required the student to participate through faith.

This method also follows from an understood or felt need on the part of the student. Jesus did not perform miracles in a sideshow style or claim that a person can make anything happen if he only believes. The miracle responded to the student's understood need.

The miracle and the object lesson share many similar advantages. The miracle can help direct attention. Deeper concepts may be illustrated by a miracle. Obviously, this method could produce a high retention rate. But these are not the foremost advantages of this method.

As stated, the miracle is built around the student's faith, and herein lies its most noteworthy benefits. The miracle matures intellectual faith into practical faith. The student with only intellectual faith often lacks commitment to that faith. The student, when placed in a position of applying that belief in a practical way, as the miracle does, must decide if he is willing to commit himself to that belief. The miracle, therefore, can cement a commitment to an immature faith.

This method can also strengthen the faith of the faltering. The confidence experienced by triumphant faith will encourage him to a greater commitment to what he believes. This

triumphant faith can also cause a committed person to expand and deepen his present faith.

Some disadvantages should also be noted. The miracle can easily be misunderstood by the student. As already mentioned, the miracle may convince the recipient that he can make anything happen just by believing.

Misunderstanding could also occur with any onlookers. An ignorance of the method, its use, or its purpose could lead to a number of misapplications.

The above factors help to determine proper candidates for this method. Since faith is prerequisite for this form of instruction, then only true believers can be instructed by it. The idea of asking a person to commit himself to a promise of God when he will not commit himself to God violates any logical reasoning.

Another proper candidate for learning through a miracle is the student whose faith is lagging. Miracles should also be considered for the one whose faith needs to grow.

The student should also have a felt need. He may misunderstand the severity of the need, but a proper perspective of one's need is not a requirement for receiving a miracle.

The project is the final participatory teaching method considered. This study defines the project as "an activity in which the class engages to deepen or to express the learning which they have done"¹² or are now pursuing. In most cases this

¹² Edge, p. 139.

method is an apprenticeship style of learning, for (1) it requires making practical use of knowledge and (2) it allows the student to learn even more while applying that knowledge.

One benefit of the apprenticeship style of learning is the emphasis it places on the practical use of the learned material. Eavey says it "connects learning and experience, thus giving good training for the solving of problems in practical life."¹³

Many teaching methods emphasize the accumulation of information, but the project method focuses on applying the lesson material. The project, according to Eavey, "emphasizes learning for use rather than as an accomplishment."¹⁴ Edge adds, "The project is one of the best means the teacher has for securing carry-over from the classroom to the lives of the members."¹⁵

This method of teaching will cultivate a sensitivity and concern for the needs of other people.¹⁶ As a conscientious student ministers to others and sees their situations, he will be impressed by the needs more realistically than he could by classroom instruction alone.

Another advantage of the project is its impact upon student retention. "It fixes the materials learned more securely in memory."¹⁷

¹³ Eavey, p. 290.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Edge, p. 141.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁷ Eavey, p. 291.

Edge includes as another benefit the development of leadership abilities and the development of cooperation between class members as the students work together on the project.¹⁸

Accompanying these assets of the project method are a few notable liabilities. Projects require certain attitudes most students will not or cannot acquire. "The average class does not possess the seriousness of purpose requisite for successful completion of a project."¹⁹ That lack of seriousness may show up in failure to learn the needed materials to accomplish the project or in a negative attitude toward the project itself.

The instructor must consider the effect the project will have upon the student's attitude. "As a class engages in a project, particularly a service project, the teacher should take care that the members do not develop a pharisaical spirit or a holier-than-thou attitude."²⁰ The student should not work from a condescending attitude but must empathize with those he serves.

The project method may also promote an "overemphasis on physical activities."²¹ This improper emphasis could cause the student to consider his Christianity to be based upon outward activities instead of the condition of the heart.

¹⁸ Edge, p. 147.

¹⁹ Eavey, p. 291.

²⁰ Edge, p. 147.

²¹ Eavey, p. 291.

Other disadvantages include the large amount of time required to conduct a project. There is also a tendency for the project to become an end within itself, i.e., a job to complete, instead of a learning activity.

With the above advantages and disadvantages, what students should be taught by the project method? They must have a degree of seriousness to learn the materials needed to undertake the project. To assign a student to a project to apply a lesson he refused to learn is ludicrous.

The student must also be serious enough to participate in the project. Learning the materials is not enough. The pupil's attitude should indicate that he is responsible enough to attempt the project sincerely.

A second consideration should be the pupil's ability to put the project in proper perspective. Is he likely to become pharisaical - viewing this activity as superceding the condition of his heart? Will he perform the project in a condescending way? Is he inclined to overlook the lessons to be learned? If the answers to the above questions are "no", this student may be a proper candidate for the project teaching method.

CHAPTER 3

Christ's Audiences

According to the Gospel narratives, Christ taught a great variety of people. His audiences varied in many aspects, including regional, cultural and educational differences. The categorization of audiences in this study was based upon the type of commitment each had toward God.

To the writer's knowledge no previous study has viewed Christ's audiences according to their commitment. The writer has, therefore, made the designations with a degree of subjectivity. A study of descriptions given in the Gospel accounts, an analysis the audience's actions, and an examination of selected commentary materials provided the basis for the designation.

In the descriptions found in the Bible, such terms as disciple and Pharisee give significant details about the person or persons described. An analysis of these terms and their connotations helped to determine the audience type assigned to each group.

The second consideration in categorizing Christ's audiences, the actions of the students, focused upon their language and life-style. Within the pupils' actions lay a significant consideration: to what degree did they understand and accept the Messiahship of Christ? In John 6:45 Jesus stated

that no one could come to Him unless the Father draws the person to Jesus. To believe in Christ a person had to be receptive to the leadership of God. And a continual belief required a continual willingness to be led by God. This implies a degree of commitment by the student.

But what if a person did not accept Christ's Messiahship? Jesus says in John 5:23 that anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father. Thus anyone who perpetually rejected Christ was rejecting God. In summary, one's continual response to Christ actually reflected his true relationship to the Father.

One should not assume that a particular student always maintained a given level of commitment to God. The student might move from one category to another, sometimes during one teaching session (e.g., the woman at the well).

The Gospels depict Christ's audiences on four levels of commitment to God.

The Noncommitted

In this study noncommitment refers to a lack of interest in making a commitment of one's self to God. The noncommitted audience included a great variety of people. They ranged from those who overtly rejected Christ, to the cities which shrugged indifferently at His teachings, to His own brothers who suggested that He perform His miracles as sideshow magic at the feast.

A distinction must be made between this audience type and the wrongly committed. The latter found true commitment to God

impossible due to a conflicting commitment to a wrong concept of God and His will. The former declined commitment based upon apparently non-religious reasons.

The Gospels give certain terms which were considered to indicate noncommitment. Sadducee is the best known of these.

A cursory view through the Gospels might leave one with the opinion that the Sadducees were religious zealots similar to the Pharisees. But they were not actually so God-minded. The Sadducees, while believing in the existence of God, thought that God exercised no significant influence in the lives of people.

Josephus wrote;

. . . the Sadducees . . . take away fate [providence] entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice. . . . [Men] may act as they please.¹

MacArthur agrees that the Sadducees ". . . cared little for religion. . . . Consequently they lived only for the present, getting everything they could from whomever they could. . . ." ²

The Sadducees are not mentioned by name until late in the ministry of Christ. This was a time of His growing popularity and possible unfavorable notice by the Roman government. Such notice could have harmed both the position and the profit of the Sadducees if the Romans chose to tighten their jurisdiction upon the Jewish people. The fact that the Sadducees showed little

¹ Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews ii, viii, 14.

² John MacArthur, Matthew 1-7 (Chicago: Moody, 1985), p. 62.

interest in Christ's work until their own interests were in jeopardy confirms that they were more concerned about their own welfare than religious matters.

To summarize, as a whole the Sadducees had no true commitment to God. Therefore Sadducee marks a noncommitted audience.

Another significant term indicating noncommitment is chief priests. Most of the chief priests were actually Sadducees.³ As to their religious stance, MacArthur says, "By New Testament times they had become little more than a group of corrupt, religiously oriented politicians."⁴ Their goal, like that of the Sadducees, appears to have been doing everything necessary to protect their aristocratic position and its benefits. Any commitment by the chief priests was to the maintenance of their status rather than to any concept of God or His will.

Another term which in later portions of Jesus' ministry indicates noncommitment is Pharisee. During the earlier ministry of Christ the Pharisees were actually wrongly committed. But as His ministry progressed their antagonism toward Him appears to have become a greater concern than their dedication to their misunderstanding of God's will.

Many instances show the Pharisees' determination to find fault with Christ, even to the extent of requiring their own

³ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴ Ibid.

logical and religious hypocrisy. One instance was their accusation that Christ exorcised demons by the power of Beelzebub, though believing their own disciples performed such acts by God's power (Mark 3:19-30). This instance has been considered to be the point where the Pharisees as a whole moved from the category of wrongly committed to noncommitted.

Jews is another word which indicates noncommitment to God in various instances. While this term was used at times to show nationality, context often makes it synonymous with certain people opposed to Christ and His ministry. Westcott says that John used Jews to describe ". . . the aggregate of the people whose opinions were opposed in spirit to the work of Christ."⁵ He adds that ". . . there were among [the Jews] two distinct tendencies, expressed in the Pharisees and Sadducees respectfully."⁶ Therefore, context dictates whether Jews refers to Pharisees or Sadducees, which determines the audience type.

The Inquirer

The inquirer was the student who was in transition between wrong or no commitment and true commitment. He was willing to look at the possibility that his beliefs were wrong and that he needed to correct his commitment. The inquirer had yet to make

⁵ B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), p. ix.

⁶ Ibid.

a true commitment to God, but he was willing to consider such a commitment.

The Gospels give few instances of inquirers. But by definition each follower must have passed through this stage before developing his true commitment to God. While it is known that many people passed through this stage, regrettably little is known about how Christ dealt with them as inquirers.

Unlike the noncommitted there are no Biblical terms which label a student as an inquirer. Context of the passage provides the determining element.

The inquirer was similar to the truly committed who was at the point of making a deeper commitment to God. Both were required to decide between a deeper commitment and moving to noncommitment. But there is a significant difference between these two types. The former began from a noncommitted or wrongly committed condition whereas the latter already had a commitment to God.

The Wrongly Committed

The wrongly committed student, as stated earlier, is not to be confused with the noncommitted. Both were in an unsuitable position with God, but the former had made a religious commitment. The error in that commitment was that he had committed himself to an improper concept of God and His will.

The wrongly committed person may have viewed God, for example, as the mighty rule-giver. God's only concern was that people follow – to the most minute detail – each of His rules.

In his commitment to this misconception of God the person actually committed himself to God's rules, not to God.

Such was the case of the Pharisees. As a whole the Pharisees

. . . considered themselves to be superspiritual. But their 'spirituality' was entirely external, consisting of the pursuit of meticulous observance of a multitude of religious rituals and taboos. . . .⁷

The Pharisees' "preoccupation with fulfilling the commands exactly became an end within itself"⁸ and turned their dedication away from God's actual design.

Unquestionably the Pharisees' method of servicing God was wrong. Yet, certainly their great dedication was commendable. Even behind the Scribal and Oral Law there was one great principle which the Scribes and the Pharisees had imperfectly grasped. The one great principle was that in all things a man must seek God's will, and that when he knows it, he must dedicate his whole life to the obeying of it. The Scribes and Pharisees were right in seeking God's will, and profoundly right in dedicating their lives to obeying it. . . .⁹

Tenney agrees, "It was [their] concern for righteousness that drove the Pharisees to their legalism with such a passion."¹⁰

⁷ MacArthur, p. 61.

⁸ Colin Brown, ed., New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 813.

⁹ William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, I (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 130.

¹⁰ Merrill C. Tenney, ed., Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, IV (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 752.

In summary, the Pharisees were a very dedicated group. But their dedication was not based upon a proper concept of God and His will.

Scribe, and the equivalent terms lawyer, rabbi, and teacher of the law are other designations which suggest improper commitment. "The scribes were primarily Pharisees" but were also found among the Sadducees.¹¹ The designation of the audience type for scribes, therefore, depends upon whether the scribe belonged to the Pharisees or to the Sadducees.

As noted earlier, the Pharisees did not remain in the category of wrongly committed during Christ's entire ministry. When their determination to discredit Christ became greater than their commitment to their concept of God's will, they moved to the noncommitted audience. For the purposes of this study Mark 3:19-30 has been chosen as the point where this transition occurred.

The Truly Committed

The truly committed person is one who, at a given point in time, has made a commitment to follow God, based on a reasonably accurate understanding of God and His will. This, however, does not necessitate the student's having a complete knowledge of God or His will.

As mentioned earlier, a person is able to cross between audience types. Thus, one who is truly committed at a given

¹¹ Brown, III, p. 480.

time could find the commitment too costly and, therefore, could fit in a different audience type at a subsequent time.

Disciple (mathetes) is the term which indicates the truly committed. "To be a disciple [mathetes] means . . . to be bound to Jesus and to do God's will. . . ." ¹² When used in relation to Jesus, mathetes generally refers to those ". . . who favored him, joined his party, [and] became his adherents." ¹³

¹² Brown, I, p. 488.

¹³ Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 386.

CHAPTER 4

Christ's Teaching Methods As Used with Each Audience

To consider the methods Jesus used with the different audiences He taught, the writer examined the Gospel record verse-by-verse. A Harmony of the Gospels by A. T. Robertson¹ was the source for merging the four Gospels. From this examination the writer determined the following information:

1. Each of Christ's teaching situations.
2. The audience Christ addressed in each situation. This involved determining whom He was teaching and the commitment level of that audience, based on the criteria given in "Christ's Audiences."
3. The teaching method or methods by which He chose to instruct in each situation.
4. The time period in each situation.²

The findings are reported below by audience types.

The Noncommitted

Approximately twenty-two percent of the teaching methods tallied in this study were addressed to this audience. (See

¹ A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ (Nashville: Broadman, 1922).

² The writer wished to see what impact, if any, the time period had in Christ's selection of teaching methods for the various audiences. More details may be found in the "Introduction" to this paper.

appendix A). This study, in examining the various occasions Christ taught this group, determined the forth-coming data.³

Christ used the discussion method with the noncommitted only one time in His first three years of public ministry. John 4:5-26 details this instance. As a Samaritan woman approached, He engaged her in a conversation. This conversation, with an added parable and object lesson, led the woman from a noncommitted person to an inquirer and then finally to a truly committed disciple.

It was uncommon for Jesus to use the conversation method to initiate a teaching situation with the noncommitted. In the six occurrences during the last six months of Jesus' ministry He used this method only once in a teaching situation He initiated. In the other five cases (Luke 10:25-30; 14:1-6; Mark 10:2-9; 11:27-33; 12:13-17 and parallel passages) Jesus used the conversation only in response to those who were confronting Him. (The students' stated purpose in four cases was to "tempt" Him. The attitude in the fifth, Mark 11:27 ff, was little better).

In the five instances mentioned Christ did not use the discussion in an open forum manner. Instead he asked directing questions whereby He maintained greater control of the situation, yet allowed limited participation by the students.

³ Unless otherwise stated, all discussion within a given audience heading will refer only to the methods used with that audience.

In the five situations just mentioned Christ chose to use at least one companion method with the discussion. Each of the companion methods was nonparticipatory. Thus He further restricted the participation of the noncommitted.

Matthew 22:41-46 contains the one remaining case of Jesus' instructing by discussion. After being barraged by several questions from the noncommitted, He turned a question upon them. Teaching by conversation enabled Jesus to first gain the mental attention of the audience and then to pose a question which exposed an error in one of their most cherished beliefs. This question forced upon the students the choice between belief and silence. If they believed what He taught, they would approach closer to believing in Him. If they were silenced He could continue His instruction with others who might benefit.

The object lesson appears among the noncommitted nine times. (See appendix A). Due to the many times it was used only general observations will be discussed.

Of the nine occurrences only two involved miraculous signs (John 4:17,18; Luke 14:4). Otherwise the lesson was built upon such common items as coins, animals, cups, weather, and Old Testament characters and events.

The object lesson usually addressed a current situation. Seven of the nine instances arose in response to accusations or temptations leveled against Christ. One of the two remaining (John 4:17,18; Luke 11:37-41) also spoke to a particular situation.

The parable, too, proved to be a significant tool for teaching the noncommitted audience. Christ used it seven-teen times as either a primary or significantly supportive teaching method. His use of the parable was almost solely confined to His last six months of ministry.

Of the seventeen instances of the parable, eleven responded to attacks by His opponents. In five others His motivation is unclear. The remaining parable, which was definitely given by His initiative, was the "Living Water" He offered to the Samaritan woman.

The method most used with the noncommitted was the discourse. Twenty-six times Christ addressed them by this method (see appendix A), usually in response to a particular situation. At times this situation was a group or individual confronting Him in order to "tempt" Him. At other times His lecture responded to questions which sought information more than accusation.

On a few occasions Jesus instructed by this method of His own initiative. In such uses the lesson addressed present needs or concerns of Christ's audience. He did not instigate lessons by the discourse simply to impart general doctrine.

Christ constructed His lectures around various materials. The lecture at times consisted of references to, or expositions, of the Scriptures. Elementary reasoning and simple information also composed some discourses Christ addressed to the noncommitted.

Inquirers

There are few recorded instances of Christ teaching the inquirer. Only four such people appear in the Gospels, with a total of seven uses of the different teaching methods. (See appendix A).

When Nicodemus came to Jesus he came as an inquirer (John 3). Jesus immediately began a conversation with him. The conversation largely centered upon a scriptural and spiritual theme with which Nicodemus, a religious leader of the nation, was very familiar. A parable was briefly introduced into the lesson as Jesus mentioned being "born again."

Christ later added a couple of object lessons. The first was the wind, which He intended to convey a concept of the working of the Holy Spirit. The other was Moses' raising the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Jesus used this incident to help Nicodemus understand the need for Christ to die.

The rich young ruler provided a similar situation. A religious leader, he came to Jesus asking about eternal life. He, like Nicodemus, felt a need for something more than he already had. Again Jesus constructed His teaching around the conversation.

Within the framework of this discussion Jesus included an object lesson to show the inaccuracy of the man's self-evaluation. Jesus' instruction to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor resembles a project. But Jesus assigned the "project" in order to show--by his nonparticipation--that he did not follow the law of God to the extent that he thought.

Jesus taught this inquirer, like Nicodemus, by conversation, with support from other methods.

Another inquirer whom Jesus instructed was Zacchaeus. This time Jesus faced, instead of a religious leader, a business man. He encountered, instead of a man honored by his fellowman, a man despised. Zacchaeus was a man with a background very different from that of the other inquirers. Christ adjusted His methods accordingly.

Zacchaeus evidently had to some degree recognized a need within himself and hoped that seeing Christ could meet that need. The Luke 19 narrative "shows that his desire was far more than the curiosity of the crowds"⁴ and implies a deep desire, if not urgency, to see this man. When He saw Zacchaeus in the tree, Jesus decided to show him that Jesus was the one who could meet his need. So He miraculously called this man by name, a man whom He had apparently never met before. Jesus did not do this miracle to prove He knew names, but as an object lesson to Zacchaeus showing the power that Christ possessed.

Any further instruction given by Christ to Zacchaeus is not recorded by Luke. But the narrative shows He did build the major framework of His total instruction upon the object lesson.

The remaining instance of Jesus' instruction of an inquirer involves only one segment of a movement from non-committed to truly committed. John 4:5-26 details this instance. When Jesus

⁴ R. C. H. Lenski, An Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1946), p. 938.

met the Samaritan woman she had a life-style which indicated she had no commitment to God. He led her to understand that she had a need for something more than she already had--"living water." In the process of the instruction she became an inquirer. This study considers that point to have been at verse 20.⁵ The woman continued the conversation with Jesus--a conversation He began when they met--with an open discussion of religion. This continued until the woman mentioned the Messiah. At this point Jesus declared Himself to be the one of whom she spoke. The woman then believed unto salvation. The conversation was the only method used in teaching this woman while she was an inquirer. However, there was surely some carry-over from the object lesson and parable used moments before.

The Wrongly Committed

The Gospels contain relatively few instances of Christ teaching the wrongly committed audience. (See appendix A). Only four percent of His teaching methods addressed this group directly. As with others, Jesus taught this group on numerous occasions as part of the mixed audience.

Jesus used the conversation method only one time with this group. Mark 3:1-6, along with the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke, describes the scene. The Pharisees and scribes, in an

⁵ Lenski apparently agrees with this general concept, though he makes no exact statement to this effect. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943), pp. 317 ff.

attempt to find grounds for accusation, con-fronted Jesus with the question "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" Jesus, for defense of His earlier stance concerning the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-8) as well as instruction, replied with a question of His own. Even though they refused to answer, Jesus was attempting to use the conversation to teach this lesson.

In this instance lies a significant fact common through most encounters Jesus had with this group. Jesus did not initiate this teaching situation. It was, in effect, forced upon Him by those who wished to find fault with Him. In fact, the Gospels give no indication that Jesus would have taught this lesson if solely dependent upon His initiative.

Four object lessons instructed wrongly committed audiences. One was the miraculous healing of the man with the withered hand. This lesson resulted from the same situation given above (Mark 3), and Jesus used it for defense as well as instruction.

The second object lesson occurred in the house of a Pharisee. Luke 7:36-50 describes a "sinful woman" who came into the room and began anointing Christ's feet. The host found in this an element for accusation. He thought, surely, a true prophet would know the sinfulness of this woman and would therefore not allow her to touch him. Jesus, after introducing the lesson with a parable, began to use this woman as an object lesson. She, unlike the host, had a proper attitude about Jesus. Then in stating that her "sins are forgiven," Christ used the woman in an object lesson to show that He was a prophet

who knew the sinful state of the woman. He also showed that he was more than a prophet, for he had power to forgive that sin.

This instance, as the one in Mark 3, came up as a defense. Neither began by Christ's own decision.

Matthew 12:1-8 details the situation and use of the third object lesson. Once more Christ was both defending and instructing after an accusation was made against His disciples. The fourth object lesson (Luke 4:25-27) also resulted from the negative actions of His audience.

Jesus used two parables in teaching wrongly committed audiences. One was the introductory element in the passage from Luke 7 mentioned above. The other parable Jesus addressed to the Pharisees who murmured when He and His disciples ate with "publicans and sinners" (Matt. 9:9-13). To this complaint, ". . . which was more a rebuke than a query,"⁶ Christ responded by giving the parable mentioned above. Again the teaching was given when He was under attack.

The only remaining method Christ used with the wrongly committed was the discourse. Four instances are mentioned. Three of these (John 5:16,17; 5:19-47; Mark 2:6-9; and parallels) were not teaching situations which began by Christ's initiative. In these instances Jesus responded to an accusation or "tempting" by His audience.

⁶ John MacArthur, Matthew 8-15 (Chicago: Moody, 1987), p. 63.

The remaining discourse was actually the first teaching situation Jesus encountered with the wrongly committed. This is also the only record of His teaching this group without having first been accused in some way. Luke 4:16-31 describes the setting. Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, stood to read. After He found the passage in Isaiah 61:1,2 --a Messianic prophecy--He proclaimed that the passage referred to Himself, thus declaring His Messiahship. This was the only time Christ initiated the teaching situation with this audience.

The Truly Committed

Of the 274 principal occurrences of teaching methods Christ directed 141 to this audience type. Due to this large number of occurrences this paper will not detail every use of each method. Therefore only a survey of the different methods will be given.

If Christ had a favorite method with this audience, it was the discourse. This study determined sixty-three situations where it instructed this group--forty-five percent of all methods. The discourse punctuated His entire ministry, with a significant peak during His last six months.

Christ often chose the discourse method when responding to various situations. On rare occasions when a disciple would confront Him (Mark 8:32-33), when a question was asked (Matt. 24:3-25:46), or when the situation presented the opportunity for instruction (Mark 10:23-27), Jesus often replied by using the discourse.

Christ chose the lecture to expose disbelief. Peter stated he would never deny the Lord (Matt. 26:33-35). Jesus told him he would in fact deny Him three times before morning. He also reminded Martha of the faith she needed through discourse (John 11:40).

The lecture was also used to encourage. The words addressed to His disciples in the storm-tossed boat (Matt. 14:27), the woman who anointed His feet (Luke 7:48-50), and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:9-10) were among many who received encouragement through the words of Jesus' discourse.

Christ also used this method to focus His audience's attention on their improper attitudes. The disciples became indignant when a woman anointed Jesus' feet with costly ointment (Matt. 26:6-13). Wrong attitudes had been exhibited when they discussed who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 22:28-30). In both instances the students heard a lecture on proper attitudes.

Christ chose the lecture as well to teach materials not directly associated with His situation at hand. The Sermon on the Mount, like many other teachings, was not prompted by an immediate need or a question of the disciples. Christ taught it solely upon his own initiative and emphasized the lecture (with accompanying methods).

Though not as prevalent as the discourse, the parable received considerable use as Christ taught the truly committed audience. Of seventeen instances, sixteen occurred during

Christ's last year of ministry--eleven during His last six months.

What type of parables did Jesus use with this group? He gave short parables, such as "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). The stories of the unjust steward and the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 16:1-8; 20:1-16) are examples of longer parables He employed.

As with the discourse, Christ chose the parable to instruct both when initiating the lesson and when responding to situations or questions. "I am the true vine . . ." (John 15:1-8) and "The harvest is plenteous . . ." (Luke 10:2) are examples of the former. The latter type is seen in Luke 12:41-48 and Mark 7:24-28.

Even with the prominent use of the parable, the object lesson was utilized more extensively. Thirty-two uses are mentioned, with miraculous events composing fourteen of these.

As with the discourse, Christ took advantage of this method throughout His ministry. During the first half of His public teaching He used the object lesson on more occasions than the discourse.

Jesus used this method in ways similar to the other methods discussed. He responded to questions and situations which arose. But of the teaching He initiated Christ chose the object lesson a higher percentage of the time than the parable. Figures for the object lesson are similar to or slightly higher than the discourse.

Another method Jesus employed with the truly committed was the conversation. With thirteen instances recorded, this method composed nine percent of this audience's principal methods of instruction.

Unlike its use with the noncommitted, Christ often chose the conversation method when He wished to initiate a lesson with the truly committed. Sometimes the conversation led into the lesson. Once Jesus asked the disciples "What were you reasoning in the way?" (Mark 9:33,34) when He knew they had been discussing who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. This led into an object lesson and a discourse which formed the framework of the lesson.

Jesus also employed the discussion method to lead the student through the lesson. Martha knew that Jesus had the power to prevent death (John 11:21). Beginning with this knowledge Jesus guided the discussion which revealed her need for faith in Christ's ability to overcome death itself.

Most notable among the apparent reasons Christ chose the conversation method was the thinking which it forced upon the student. When Jesus asked Philip about feeding the mass of people (John 6:5-7) He did not intend for Philip to help Him figure out how to accomplish the task. Rather, Christ made him think in order "to prove him."

Another of Jesus' teaching methods with the truly committed was the miracle. As outlined in an earlier chapter the miracle required faith by the student. Therefore, only believers qualified to be instructed by it.

The Gospels record thirteen instances of the use of the miracle. They do not mention it in the first year of Christ's public ministry. After that time its use is evenly spread through His ministry.

Any common elements in the occurrences of the miracles did not include the nationality of the learner. Among the list were a Jew (Mark 5:22-23, 35-43), a Samaritan (Luke 17:11-19), a Roman (Matt. 8:5-11), and a Syro-Phoenician (Matt. 15:22-28). The miracle was obviously not limited by ethnic or national boundaries.

It appears the miracle was chosen at times to mature a person's faith. Such was the case with Peter (Luke 5:4-8). Christ instructed Peter to cast his nets during a time of day and in a place which were not conducive for good fishing. And He made this request after Peter had spent hours of fishing in more favorable circumstances and yet had not caught anything. Peter appears to have had at least a degree of hesitancy. This notwithstanding, by faith he knew what Jesus asked was what he should do. His words also suggest he realized a need to do whatever the Master asked. Thus he did as Jesus said, and the miracle was performed. This developed Peter's intellectual faith into a more practical faith.

Mark 9:22-27 relates a situation in which a faltering faith was strengthened by the miracle. The father of a demon-possessed boy brought him to Jesus to be healed. He instead found nine of the apostles, who tried to cast out the demon but they failed. When Jesus appeared, the father asked Him to

remove the demon "if thou canst." This clause in the Greek text is the protasis of a first class conditional statement--i.e., the mind of the speaker accepts the condition as true. In effect, the man said, "Jesus, heal him since You can." Although the true meaning of Christ's next words are disputed, the natural flow indicates that Christ turned the responsibility back upon the father. He said, "Since you can . . ." [emphasis by this writer], and then he based that ability upon the father's faith. To this the father exclaimed that he did believe but needed help with his unbelief. The miracle, no doubt, did strengthen that unbelief.

Christ performed many other miracles during His ministry. In each case the student exhibited a degree of faith. An understood need within the student also accompanied each miracle. A need for healing was expressed in ten of the miracles, and grief over the loss of a loved one was the need in another. Fear and a desire to be with his Savior were the needs which prompted Peter to walk on the water to Jesus. And the need to obey his Lord motivated Peter to cast his nets which miraculously caught the multitude of fish.

The one remaining method Jesus used with the truly committed audience was the project. A total of three projects are mentioned in the Gospels for all audiences. All three were performed by the truly committed.

Two of the projects were evangelistic exercises (Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10:1-16). The twelve apostles were the students in the first instance. The pupils in the second project were seventy

of Christ's disciples. (Luke 10:20 confirms that the seventy were believers). In both cases the students were to make practical application of the instructions Jesus gave before they started the project.

The third project was different from the usual concept of projects. By definition the project is the practical, supervised application of lesson materials. In Mark 6:31 Jesus taught the twelve that they needed rest. Verse 32 shows they did make a practical, supervised application of that teaching. They left in a boat with their instructor, heading toward a desert place for that rest. This event, therefore, constituted a project.

The Mixed Audience

The mixed audience received a sizable portion of Christ's teaching. Fifty-five occurrences of primary or supporting methods were found. This was approximately twenty percent of the total teaching occurrences given during His ministry.

Jesus did not often employ the discourse with mixed audiences, as He did with specific groups. Only eight instances were recorded, and seven of those came during the last year of Christ's work.

Of the teachings He initiated himself, Jesus used the discourse more with the mixed audience than He did with the other audiences. Only one lecture (John 7:20-31) came in response to comments made directly to Him from the congregation. Several discourses He initiated when a situation presented an

opportunity to teach on a certain subject. In other instances He called the people together and expounded upon a subject unrelated to the situation or conversations at hand.

The parables composed a larger portion of the teaching methods addressed to mixed audiences. The Gospels record eleven instances, with the last six months of Christ's ministry claiming seven of them.

Parables directed toward this group tended more toward extended stories than the short pithy statements found among some of the other audiences. The rich fool (Luke 12:17-21), the sower (Matt. 13:3-8), and the ten servants with the ten pounds (Luke 19:11-27) fall in this section.

The mixed audience boasts the largest number of object lessons. Thirty-four uses of this method, including eighteen which were miraculous, are given. This method comprises sixty-two percent of all principal methods used with this group in teaching situations.

As in all audiences, the miraculous object lesson showed the power of God in Christ, giving credibility to His Messianic claims. But some of the non-miraculous object lessons found in this section also validate His claims. Matthew 21:1-9 details His triumphant entry into Jerusalem--a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, which happened as they watched. His cleansing of the temple (John 2:13-18) was another prophecy they saw fulfilled.

As with some of the other audiences, many of the object lessons to the mixed audiences were lessons which Christ

instigated of His own decision. Others were responses to situations or needs.

Conversation would be a difficult method to use with an audience which was usually described as including "multitudes." Yet two such instances are recorded. John 6:25-40 relates a series of questions and answers between Christ and the multitude. In the other case Christ asked for a simple judgment relating to a hypothetical situation (parable) He had posed (Matt. 21:40-41 and parallels). No other mention of a conversation with this group is given.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study consists of two principal sections. The first summarizes the information found in the analysis of Christ's teaching methods as used with the various audiences. The second section offers practical applications of this study's findings for the present-day teacher.

Summary of Findings

In the following summation of the information ascertained by this study, the bulk relates to what methods Jesus favored with the various groups. Possible explanations of His choices are given as appropriate.

The noncommitted. This study tallied fifty-seven primary or supporting occurrences of teaching methods Christ aimed toward the noncommitted. Of these, discourse composed twenty-four, parables encompassed seventeen, object lessons formed nine, and conversation completed the list with seven. This list clearly indicates that Christ had a preference for nonparticipatory teaching methods with this audience. Even the conversation was limited both in its type of use and by its being utilized jointly with non-participatory methods.

Jesus used the discourse consistently with the noncommitted. The object lesson peaked during His third year.

(This was the beginning of the bulk of His instructing this audience). Christ's last six months of teaching provided the zenith of the parable. In fact, He almost never used the parable other than in this period. The conversation closely followed the same pattern. It was solely confined to His last six months, except for one instance.

Most of Christ's teaching with the noncommitted responded to direct opposition by the audience. This study could determine no direct influence this had upon His choice of methods, except that He used no projects or miracles. His selection of methods when prompted by the situation or when teaching totally of His initiative suggest a preference for the nonparticipatory methods.

To conclude, Christ initiated few lessons with this audience. He did, however, make himself available for their questions and even their accusations, for this allowed Him the opportunity to instruct them upon a topic in which they showed interest. He preferred the discourse to the other methods, but freely used the parable and object lesson. Within limits He occasionally employed the conversation as He taught the noncommitted.

The inquirer. Although Christ addressed the four inquirers with a mere seven uses of teaching methods during His whole ministry some obvious patterns were established. Of the seven the conversation and the object lesson were each utilized three times. One use of the parable completes the list.

Christ showed definite preference for the conversation with this audience. Discussion was specifically mentioned in seventy-five percent of the cases. In His use of this method Christ allowed the student much more freedom to participate than He allowed the noncommitted. With the exception of one instance, the inquirer and the truly committed were the only audiences for which Christ used the conversation when teaching solely of His own initiative.

Christ used the object lesson with at least three of the four inquirers. The parable was used in one of those instances.

The analysis of Christ's teaching methods with this audience indicates that the different periods of time had no effect on His selection of methods. Whether the teaching was initiated by the student or by Christ also proved non-consequential.

To conclude, it appears that Jesus favored the conversation method so heavily due to the involvement required by the student. This allowed the student to express what he thought or did not understand. Jesus was able to address any misunderstandings or needed information.

The object lesson and parable were used to help the inquirer understand the more difficult concepts concerning God, His power, and His plan. What plain speech could hardly explain these methods could picture.

The wrongly committed. This study found eleven principal uses of teaching methods with the wrongly committed. Four

discourses, two parables, four object lessons, and one conversation composed the eleven instances.

The lecture reached a peak at the beginning of Christ's second year of ministry. The object lesson climaxed during the latter part of the same year. No observable pattern was found for the other methods due to the few occurrences.

Christ avoided the use of teaching methods which required the participation of the wrongly committed student. He attempted to use the conversation method with the wrongly committed only once. This was the only use of the participatory methods with this group.

Only once did Jesus initiate the lesson with this group. In that instance He chose the discourse to quote Scripture and proclaim His Messiahship. Any other teaching situation resulted from His audience's accusations or attempts to find fault with Him.

To conclude, Christ chose not to instigate any teachings with this group except to proclaim His Messiahship. The time factor may also suggest He first instructed them in discourse but later chose the object lesson due to increased hostility. However, the information is insufficient to form a definite conclusion.

The truly committed. This study determined 141 principal uses of teaching methods which Jesus employed with the truly committed. This included sixty-three discourses, seventeen

parables, thirty-two object lessons, thirteen each of conversations and miracles, and three projects.

The discourse was the obvious preference for this audience. Its usage was consistent throughout Christ's ministry, but reached an enormous peak during the last six months. In fact, Christ chose the lecture in seventy-five percent of the teaching methods He used in His final week.

The parable was not used as prominently with the truly committed as with other groups. It did not become a significant tool with this audience until the final twelve months of Christ's ministry. It reached a notable peak during the latter six months.

The object lesson attained its peak during the first half of Christ's final year, just prior to the parable's peak. The object lesson was another preferred method and received considerable use throughout His teaching.

With this audience, like the inquirers, Jesus employed the conversation in the lessons He initiated. Except for two occurrences, this method was limited to instruction given during Christ's last year.

The miracle proved useful during all but the first year of Jesus' teaching. During its use the number of occurrences remained consistent. But as a percentage of the total uses of methods during a given period, the miracle declined from its beginning.

The only other teaching method used with this audience was the project. The three projects took place during the last year

and a half Christ taught. Like the miracle, Christ used this method only with the truly committed.

Whether the lesson was of Christ's own initiative appears to have had no effect upon His selection of teaching methods.

A clear pattern emerges when one looks at the peaks of the different methods chronologically. During the first two years the object lesson enjoyed a notable advantage over the discourse. (The miracle also reached its peak during this time). Beginning in the third year the object lesson gave way to the increased use of the discourse. About midway through this year the project was begun and the parable became more prominent. The conversation also hit a sudden peak at this time. As the last six months began, the discourse was still increasing, as was the parable. The last miracle and project were completed in this period, and the conversation was tapering off. In Christ's last week of public teaching the lecture reached its zenith. The parables had again dropped below the object lesson, which was itself almost gone.

The writer offers two possible explanations for the chronology of the above events.¹ The first possibility is that the pattern coincided with the growth of the audience. This explanation suggests that Jesus began instructing the disciples

¹ The explanations which follow are based upon the teaching methods which Christ used with the twelve apostles, individually or as a whole. Except for the conversation and miracle, which are omitted from the explanations, the methods used with the Twelve accurately depict His pattern of teaching with the truly committed audience in general.

by the object lesson, especially the miraculous type. This helped solidify their belief in His Messiahship. Building upon that foundation, Christ began to increase the use of the discourse and, shortly thereafter, the parable. By combining these He gave instruction by illustrated and nonillustrated methods jointly. During this time the object lessons began to emphasize less of the miraculous and more of the illustrative. Also during this time the maturity of the disciples had reached the point that they were capable of participating in the project. As Christ completed His ministry, the disciples had actually grown to the point that He could accomplish the majority of His teaching by the discourse without illustrations.

A second possible explanation relates to the time factor of Christ's coming death. During the earlier portions of His ministry time was not a large factor. He was able to take the needed time to wait for the appropriate object or incident upon which to base His teaching. As time began to become more precious, Jesus formulated His own object lessons in the form of parables. In this time He was also using any natural objects which might occur. In the final months, when He was so busy, He began to shorten His teachings to the discourse. During the passion week, when every minute was so valuable, He practically abandoned all methods for the discourse to impart the most material in the least amount of time.

It is the writer's opinion that both audience growth and time considerations influenced Jesus' choice of methods.

To conclude, Christ apparently felt free to use any method with the truly committed. The limitations of the students affected the choice of teaching methods to a lesser degree with this audience than with other audiences. A progression of favored methods occurred, with audience growth and/or time factors being possible reasons for it.

The mixed audience. The analysis of the mixed audience shows fifty-five principal uses of teaching methods with them. Eight discourses, eleven parables, thirty-four object lessons, and two conversations comprise that total.

In three of the other four audiences the discourse was the most utilized method. But here it reached only fifteen percent of the methods counted.

Also, the teaching done by miraculous object lessons ranked higher than the non-miraculous type. This was true for none of the other audiences.

The methods which required student participation were limited to the conversation. When using the conversation Christ did not open it for general discussion, but limited the participation of the audience.

Few of the teaching situations arose from accusations against Christ. Many responded to opportunities and situations for teaching. In several instances Christ's own decision initiated the teaching. These factors appear to have had no effect upon His selection of teaching methods.

The effect of time on the choice of methods appears to have had little consequence. The discourse was used almost solely during the end of Christ's ministry. During this same period the miraculous object lesson declined.

To conclude, Christ addressed the mixed audience almost exclusively by nonparticipatory methods. (This may have resulted from the size of the audience, as well as other factors). The object lesson was a particularly favored method. This possibly reflects its ability to attract the interest of a wider range of people than some other methods. The miraculous type of object lesson also indicated that Christ was a messenger of God, and that God had a concern about people and their needs.

What prompted the lesson had no effect on the method chosen. The use of the miraculous object lesson declined, and discourse replaced it.

General remarks. A couple of general remarks conclude this section of the paper.

First, the commitment level of the student correlated directly with the amount of participation he was allowed by the teaching method. The pupils with improper commitment or no commitment participated in a very limited way in the conversation. The inquirers, who were willing to consider true commitment, enjoyed more freedom with the conversation method. The truly committed were taught by all forms of the participatory methods as freely as the nonparticipatory methods.

Second, Jesus always varied His methods. Even though He limited some of the audiences to nonparticipatory methods, He did not limit that group to only one method. Variety is needed in addressing any audience. "It has often been said that the world's worst teaching method is . . . the one you use all the time."²

Suggestions for Teachers

This section examines four principal areas for comparison: parallel methods for modern use; parallel audiences of modern times; selection of methods with the modern audience; and general considerations.

Parallel methods. Many of the teaching methods Christ employed are still used. Parallels for these are obvious. However, a few of His methods, such as the miracle, do not have obvious parallels for the modern teacher. This section is given in order for the teacher to see how he may adapt Christ's methods to today's teaching.

The lecture of Christ differed in no significant respect from the lecture of today. No change is necessary to utilize the lecture in the modern teaching situation. In fact, it is one of the most frequently used modern methods.

The parable is also often used today. Many of the illustrations which preachers and teachers use would qualify as

² Glenn Taylor and Mickey Lee, Principles for Making Life's Decisions: Teacher's Guide (Dallas: DCM Publishing House, 1981), p. 8.

parables. As defined earlier, the parable is the teaching method which utilizes a comparison based upon a hypothetical story or comparative statement. It is not based upon people or events which the student has actually seen or knows to have occurred.

Object lessons which were not miraculous events also have direct parallels in modern teaching. Object lessons present concrete objects or known events to illustrate or validate the lesson. This could range from the rock which the teacher uses to represent the steadfastness of God's love to the mentioning of Abraham in order to illustrate the benefits of faith.

The conversation is also used in present times. Usually under the name of discussion or question-and-answer, this method appeals to many teachers.

The miracle cannot be duplicated in the modern teaching situation. Yet some important aspects of this method should be considered.

Faith was one of the notable elements of the miracle. That faith rested in one who had greater power and knowledge than the students had themselves. The faith was often expressed in the student's desire for Him to intervene to meet a particular need. At other times the student's faith was expressed by completing a task which Jesus had assigned.

Nothing in the above description is beyond the modern student who is at the same point at which the student who received the miracle in Christ's time was. Such a pupil should

be led to apply his faith in the one who performed the miracles of old.

The miraculous object lesson combined the object lesson and the miracle. It had the quality of being an intervention of God in the normal course of time. Like the object lesson the miracle possessed the characteristic of illustrating or validating. Also, it did not require the student's participation.

The miraculous object lesson also combines the miracle and objects lesson in its present-day applications. The modern teacher simply illustrates God's intervention in the lives or events of real people, including himself.

The project of today is a direct parallel to the project as Jesus used it.

Parallel audiences. Just as many of the teaching methods Christ used have direct parallels in modern pedagogy, many commonalities can be drawn between the audiences He taught and those of today. This section is given in order to help the teacher to determine what type of audience he is now teaching. This will also provide the basis for the consideration of teaching methods given in the next section.

The noncommitted is the person or group which is consistently more concerned with anything other than God, or his concept of God. This includes both those who actively reject Him and those who passively reject Him because of indifference or other commitments.

The inquirer is the student who is considering making a commitment to God. The student must have more than just a curiosity – but not necessarily a complete understanding of what God wants.

The modern parallel of the wrongly committed is the student who has a genuine commitment to his concept of God. But this knowledge is erroneous in some significant way. Most, if not all, of the wrongly committed whom Christ instructed believed in God. But their interactions with Christ indicate that an acceptable parallel can be drawn between them and cults or any group which has, on a large scale, a false concept of God and His workings with people.

The above description is not meant to imply that only the extremist religions belong in this category. Many of this audience are mainstream church members who believe that their sole duty to God is abiding by the letter of every law He gave, implied, or might have meant. A mental knowledge of God as the supreme being does not preclude a student's belonging to this group.

The truly committed person is the one who has given himself to a proper understanding of God. Whatever errors this pupil may have in his ideas and understandings, his commitment is directed toward a basic concept of God which is sound.

The mixed audience, like the ones Jesus taught, is composed of students from more than one of the groups above. Notice that Christ did not treat the Twelve as a mixed audience, even though one (Judas) was not truly committed. Therefore, an audience

should not be classified as mixed unless a significant element of various groups is present.

Selection of methods. Having decided the type of audience which he instructs, the teacher may consider possible teaching methods. These suggested methods are arranged according to the various audiences.

The noncommitted audience will benefit most from the methods which do not require participation. Conversation may be used if the teacher limits participation by directing questions or by other teaching methods.

To follow the example of Christ the teacher of the noncommitted must not teach only when he has a particular lesson prepared. He must also be willing and able to teach as situations or even opposition create opportunities. The teacher should not consider such opposition as an obstacle, but an opportunity to meet the student in his area of concern. It was in this type of setting the majority of conversations occurred, although other methods were also used.

In considering the inquirer, as has already been stated, no definite conclusion can be drawn upon only four students and their encounter with Christ. Yet some general suggestions may be in order.

The conversation is greatly preferred. The discourse tends to impose the ideas of the teacher upon the student, but conversation allows the student to formulate his own ideas and conclusions. This is especially needed for the inquirer.

The conversation also allows the teacher to answer specific questions the student may have. This would likely not prove true with any other method. The conversation also allows for involvement by the student – a very beneficial element when instructing the inquirer.

Modern teachers should consider object lessons. The truths of salvation are difficult to understand. And yet the inquirer wants and needs a grasp of some of these difficult concepts. Comparison with items that he already knows and understands provides the link to move the student to greater comprehension.

Teaching methods should be selected which will address the inner need the inquirer has. Unless the student can see, through the teaching method, how God can meet his needs he will assume that Christianity is no different from other forms of relief he has tried.

How should the teacher instruct the wrongly committed? As with the noncommitted, the teacher should be willing and able to defend his beliefs. Such defense need not be offensive, but informative and instructional. It should also be accomplished by a nonparticipatory teaching method.

The parable and object lesson have some advantages which might profit this group. A story can lead to a desired judgment. This judgment can then be applied to the present situation, causing the student to pronounce his own conclusion.

The object lesson can be utilized in a similar way to illustrate or prove the lesson being taught. Either method could also be used as an introduction for the lecture.

How should the teacher instruct the wrongly committed? Christ's example offers a plain and simple formula. The teacher should declare Christ. He should declare that He is the one for which the student is really looking. He should base those declarations upon God's written word. Then the teacher should live a life that will make the student ask questions concerning the source of his faith.

The possibilities of methods are almost limitless with the truly committed. Immaturity of the student may not permit the use of such methods as the project. It may also limit the use of the discourse and miracle. Even so, the teacher has a greater variety of methods from which to choose.

The teacher should consider the amount of information he wishes to present to the students in the lesson. The methods with greater participation require more time and therefore limit the amount of lesson materials which the teacher can give.

On the other hand, the teacher should consider participatory methods when a deeper application is desired. As a general rule, the more involved the student is, the greater the impact of the lesson.

The discourse is beneficial to the teacher who needs to present a large amount of information. It should also be selected when the lesson has to be learned quickly. The disciples did not have time for the Lord to tell a parable when they were scared for their lives in the storm-tossed ship. Jesus simply stated, "Do not be afraid, it is I," for time was of great importance.

The teacher should consider applying the modern parallel of the miracle as the opportunity may arise. When the teacher knows the student has a particular need, he should direct the student to specific promises in God's Word which deal with that need. He should then call for the student to trust God to intervene in the need.

If the teacher's audience is mixed he should consider having a time set aside to address the truly committed alone. Over half of Christ's teaching methods were directed to the truly committed, even though He constantly taught them with the multitudes. If teaching directly to the truly committed was that important to Him, it should be to the modern teacher also.

Due to the greater range of commitment, and consequently different beliefs and attitudes about spiritual matters, the direct, open lecture of spiritual matters is not best with the mixed audience. The teacher must seek a common element upon which to base the lesson outside the spiritual area. This is therefore a prime time for using the parable or the object lesson. With these methods those who wish to learn more may look beyond the illustration and understand what is being illustrated. Those who do not care to understand can enjoy the presentation, which can plant a seed that will sprout at a later time.

The discussion method may be used in some cases with this audience. But again the problem of a common interest restricts the discussion method with the mixed audience.

And the commitment of this group is not such that the miracle or the project is appropriate.

General considerations. This study suggests that the teacher should select his teaching method with the following in mind.

Teaching methods requiring participation provide more freedom for the student than the methods which do not. The pupil has the freedom to express himself. He also has the freedom to try the practical side of Christianity to extents the other methods do not afford him. Their profit for the serious student is obvious.

Equally as obvious is the disaster which would occur when these freedoms are placed in the reach of the insincere student. To allow him to express himself is to allow the teaching situation to become, to a degree, under his control. Therefore, methods promoting participation by the student should be used sparingly with the insincere audience.

The teaching method must be on the level of the student's interest and understanding to have his participation in the lesson. Activity without understanding is not involvement in the lesson.

Student participation, active or passive, is dulled by the teacher's limiting his instruction to too narrow a field of methods. The student becomes desensitized to the method which a teacher uses exclusively. Greater involvement can be achieved by using a variety of methods, even within the same lesson.

The amount of information to be given affects the choice of teaching methods. Methods of greater participation, while usually providing higher retention, also lower the amount of material that can be covered in a given time period.

The right teaching method for today will not necessarily be the right one the next time one teaches. Student growth, audience type, amount of lesson material, and other factors will make the next teaching situation different from the previous one. It may therefore require a different teaching method.

To conclude, the optimum method for teaching is that method which affords the greatest amount of student participation which the lesson material and student commitment will reasonably allow.

Appendix A

TEACHING METHODS USED WITH VARIOUS AUDIENCES
DURING TIME PERIODS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

Audience: Noncommitted

	Time period ¹							T
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 ²	
Discourse	-	-	-	1	2	3	20(7)	26
Parable	-	1	-	-	1	-	15(1)	17
Obj. Lesson	-	2	-	-	2	2	4(1)	10
Conversation	-	1	-	-	-	-	6(3)	7
Miracle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Project	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	4	-	1	5	5	45(12)	60

¹ ¹The time periods are based upon six-month intervals. The first began with the Feast of Tabernacles which occurred at the time of Christ's baptism. That period continued until the end of the Passover. The next one began at that point and continued until the next Tabernacles. This cycle continued until the Passover of Christ's death, giving a total of seven periods. For more details see Bill Hovey, "The Ministry of Jesus Christ" chronology chart (n.p.: Joe Cooper and Bill Hovey, 1975, as cited by Charles Caldwell Ryrie, The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978) n.pag.

² The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of lessons taught during Christ's final week of teaching. This amount is included in the figure just preceding it.

Audience: Inquirer

	Time period							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T
Discourse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parable	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Obj. Lesson	1	-	-	-	-	-	2(-)	3
Conversation	1	1	-	-	-	-	1(-)	3
Miracle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Project	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3	1	-	-	-	-	3(-)	7

Audience: Wrongly Committed

	Time period							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T
Discourse	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	4
Parable	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Obj. Lesson	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	4
Conversation	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Miracle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Project	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	1	4	6	-	-	-	11

Audience: Truly Committed

	Time period							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T
Discourse	2	-	2	2	5	14	38(21)	63
Parable	-	-	-	1	-	5	11(2)	17
Obj. Lesson	5	1	2	2	4	8	10(4)	32
Conversation	1	-	-	-	1	7	4(1)	13
Miracle	-	-	3	1	3	3	3(-)	13
Project	-	-	-	-	1	1	1(-)	3
Total	8	1	7	6	14	38	67(28)	141

Audience: Mixed Audience

	Time period							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T
Discourse	-	-	-	1	-	1	6(3)	8
Parable	-	-	1	1	1	1	7(2)	11
Obj. Lesson	2	-	3	3	5	7	14(4)	34
Conversation	-	-	-	-	-	1	1(1)	2
Miracle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Project	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	2	-	4	5	6	10	28(10)	55

Audience: All Audiences

	Time period							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T
Discourse	2	1	5	4	7	18	64(31)	101
Parable	1	1	2	3	2	6	33(5)	48
Obj. Lesson	8	3	5	9	11	17	30(9)	83
Conversation	2	2	-	1	1	8	12(5)	26
Miracle	-	-	3	1	3	3	3(-)	13
Project	-	-	-	-	1	1	1(-)	3
Total	13	7	15	18	25	53	143(50)	274

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