

## The Ideal Student

June 23, 2019

Luke 6:39-49

If I were to ask you all what makes the ideal student, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Some might think of arriving to class/school on time, always turns in their homework, helps others, says “please” and “thank you”, is polite, or other qualities on the behavioral side of things. Others might think of something like getting exceptional grades, high test scores, large scholarships, acceptance to acclaimed schools/programs, or other qualities that are more on the academic side of things. Still others, like myself, might think of the bowl cut, braces, large glasses, scrawny stature, and many books hugged tightly to their chest. Then again, maybe that’s just admitting that I watched too many cartoons as a child. Still, who would have thought that the answer to what makes the ideal student is right here in the Bible, and that Jesus lists off the qualities of the ideal student for us to follow?

The first quality of an ideal student we can pick up from this passage is that a student does more than just hear what the teacher says. He/she actually takes those lessons to heart. This is what Jesus is talking about when he is talking about the house built on a sure foundation versus on no foundation. The student who hears and takes to heart that which is heard has a foundation on which to build and something solid that helps him/her through challenges, both great and small, in life. The student who hears but doesn’t take to heart what is heard has nothing to fall back on when life challenges him/her. This is what happened to Judas Iscariot. He walked, ate, asked questions of the greatest teacher someone could ask for, but none of those lessons really were absorbed. He collapsed under the pressures of greed and self-preservation, and later collapsed under the weight of his guilt for what he had done, not having learned that God would forgive him. If we hear that which is taught to us, though, let it become a part of us, we have that “sure foundation,” that extra strength on which to use in facing life’s challenges.

The second quality of an ideal student Jesus gives us in this parable is using the knowledge received for good. Jesus says that good intentions bear good fruits, and evil intentions bear evil fruits. Once knowledge and wisdom is given to us, it is ours to do with as we wish. For example, if you teach a child that  $1+1=2$ , that can be translated into “Hey, that kid has the same candy bar as me. If I take it from them, then I’ll have two of the same candy bar.” It could also translate into “Hey, no one is playing with that kid over there. If I go play with them, then we’ll both have a friend to play with.” The former ends in one sad child and a second child with a stomach ache from too much candy. The latter ends in two kids with a new friend in each other.

Another example would be this: recently, I learned how small chiggers are. That knowledge can be used to say, “If I end up going into the woods, I’m wearing long sleeves and pants.” That knowledge could also be brushed aside because “I’ve never seen a chigger. They must not exist.” The former decreases your chances of getting a disease and from getting bitten. The latter puts your health at risk, but, on the plus side, it also supports the pharmaceutical industry. The same can be said for any knowledge achieved, and so long as we put it to good use, it shall work out in the end.

Lastly, the ideal student considers what the purpose of the knowledge given is (i.e. why is it the teacher is telling him/her this). Isaiah 55 talks about how rain/snow cannot return to the sky until it has served its purpose (i.e. to nourish the earth and its lifeforms). Jesus, the Word made flesh, could not return to Heaven until he had fulfilled his purpose, which went beyond just self-sacrifice. It was also teaching us how we are to live, to treat each other, how God is with us always to the ends of the Earth, how nothing is impossible for God. His purpose was to start a reaction where this great news continues to spread down through the generations until the end of time. What do you know? It's 2,000 years later and we're still talking about it. On the flip side of the story, though, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and religious leaders were teaching the common folk that Jesus was wrong, he was to be killed for his actions and words, God will show him no mercy and that any who follow him will meet just as cruel and torturous demise as the one they follow. The former teaches about love, something that is meant to bind us together, about an end where we all shall be together in the light of the same God. The latter teaches about judging one another, being overly-critical and reprimanding each other for one another's misdeeds, an end where all that shall be known is pain and division, an end where the blind shall lead the blind, and where many shall fall into the metaphorical pit which Jesus speaks of. Jesus is speaking about being able to see that difference, to be able to see the consequences of one lesson versus another and to choose which end shall lead to prosperity and peace among all persons.

We have in Jesus a teacher who invites us to follow him, has much to say and has said much already, teaches us how to make good of the knowledge provided, means no ill will by his messages. We however must put forth effort as well. We must listen to those lessons and make proper usage of them, because the students will one day become the teachers, and many of us here today are teachers of a sort to someone. Perhaps you don't even know who your pupil(s) is/are. Perhaps you don't know in what subject(s) you are teaching them. If that thought scares you, if you fear you might be the blind leading the blind, take a step back from the teaching role for a second and become the ideal pupil once more. Learn from Jesus how you might teach others, for in him, you will find your answers to all life's tests.