

First Lessons to Master

#0863

Study given by W. D. Frazee—January 1, 1961

During the time I spent in Mexico many thoughts were awakened in my heart concerning the type of training we should be giving, and the experience we should be having in order to meet the needs in the vast unentered areas.

As I looked over hundreds and hundreds of miles where the dear Indian people live, and thought of how great their needs are not only to hear this message but to have the message accomplish its full purpose in their hearts and lives of preparing a people for the coming of the Lord, my heart was greatly impressed.

I shared some thoughts with you some evenings ago from the 54th chapter of Isaiah that were impressed upon our mind at the time I was down there. I want to share some more with you.

While we think of meeting the needs of the great unentered areas, we want to think also of the great tests that are just ahead of us; the great tribulations and conflicts that the church must pass through.

Dear ones, we are going into very serious times. It sounds almost trite to say it, for we have heard it so many times. We have been told that trouble is sometimes greater in anticipation than in reality, but that is not true of the crisis ahead of us. It is going to be more severe than we can imagine. So this is a subject we cannot speak of too often or dwell upon too much. Of course, our dwelling upon it should be of a practical nature. We want to be thinking of how to get ready.

There are two things I would like to have us think about. One is to meet the needs of the great unentered areas, both in this country and elsewhere; to meet the needs of souls who will be willing to sacrifice and give of themselves so others may hear the message, and know how to do it in a successful way in difficult circumstances.

We also need to know what it means to be prepared to go through the storm in the future. The more I think of it the more I think the answer is the same in both cases. I think whatever lessons we learn to prepare us for one will prepare us for the other. I am equally certain that unless we learn the lessons to prepare for one we will not be prepared for the other.

"And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" Isaiah 13:54.

God wants us all to be taught of the Lord; taught about Him and taught by Him. The Lord is to be our teacher. We are to have an experience in learning of Him. Jesus says:

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls"
Matthew 11:29.

Is Jesus your teacher? What lessons is He teaching you? I suppose we could think of many lessons we might learn.

Suppose I knew I would have my daughter just one more year. Do you suppose knowing that would make any difference in what I taught her? Parents, if you knew you were going to have your children just one more year, would it make any difference in what you taught them?

Children, young people, and students, if you knew that you had just one more year to learn things, would it make any difference in what you tried to learn? I rather believe it would. For most of us I think it would make some difference.

You don't know that you will only have one more year. No. But in a sense it is more serious than that. I am not sure I will have even a year. Are you? Can you guarantee it? But thousands of people are going ahead with their plans as if they were not only going to have a year, but five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or more. Aren't they? Sure. You hear people who haven't even finished their education talking about careers and plans that will eventually give them retirement benefits, and weighing various courses to be considered with that as one of the factors.

The message for this hour is one that is geared directly to the nearness of the end and the urgency of the work of preparation necessary to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. So when it comes to this question of what lessons to learn, I ought to be teaching and learning the lesson of first importance. Isn't that clear? If my opportunity should cease, I could say, Thank the Lord we didn't get to go over everything we would have liked to, but we got done the thing that was of first importance.

We are told that the Gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life's problems. That's why Jesus said:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" Matthew 6:33.

If we will seek the first things, God will see to it that as many of the second and the third things we need will come along. That relates to material matters. It relates to the things we learn. It relates to everything in life. I would like to ask, What is the first lesson Jesus would like to teach us? What are the first things He wants His children to know?

I have selected two, and may I tell you friends, they are kindergarten lessons. If you feel they are beneath you as we study them, I suggest that perhaps you have not understood how vital and fundamental these lessons are in their simplicity. They do not belong to post graduate work. They belong to the kindergarten. I think you will see as we study them that they underlie a great many other things.

If we are taught of the Lord we will have peace. The way to have peace and be happy and have a good time is to be taught of God. So there is nothing about these lessons we have to be afraid of. The only thing to be afraid of is not learning them. If you learn these two lessons, you will eventually learn everything else you will ever need to know. But unless you learn them, nothing else you learn will do you any final and lasting good.

The first lesson is the lesson of obedience and the second lesson is the lesson of guidance. Without the second, you won't know what to do. Without the first, you won't do it.

You say, "Brother Frazee, why do you put the first second and the second first? Why don't you put the lesson of guidance first and the lesson of obedience second?"

I will tell you why. The reason I have put the lesson of obedience first and the lesson of guidance second is because that is where they belong. In fact, I didn't put them there. The Teacher put them there, and the teacher is God.

One of the great difficulties with people today is that they are much more interested in knowing something than they are in doing something. That is false education. False education produces that attitude, and that attitude in turn produces false education.

I repeat, these two wonderful, primary lessons are first the lesson of obedience and second the lesson of guidance. Unless we learn the second we won't know what to do. Unless we learn the first, we won't do it even if we know it. So let's study those lessons. I am not sure how far we will get, but I would like to get into the first lesson, the lesson of obedience.

You say, "Brother Frazee, we know about obedience. We have heard about that a long time."

Yes you have. But I want to show you the importance God attaches to obedience.

"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord: Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" 1 Samuel 15:22.

Who was Samuel talking to? Saul. Who was Saul? The king. The first king of Israel. Imagine talking to a king like that. But that's the privilege of a prophet, the duty and responsibility of a prophet. And even if you were the king of the world the inspired prophet of God would stand up and look you in the face, as Nathan did to David and as Samuel did to Saul, and tell you there is one thing God expects. Obedience. I want you to notice the attitude Saul was taking:

"And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord" 1 Samuel 15:22.

It could be there is someone here who will say, I know that. Let's go on now to the second, third, and fourth lesson. It's like some students that teachers have difficulty with in school who want to be in the fourth grade and can't even read second grade reading. They want to be in the eighth grade and hardly know the multiplication tables. They say, I have had all that. I have a card here that says I have had all that. The trouble with that card is that it can't solve problems or pronounce words.

So it is in this lesson of obedience. Saul said, I have obeyed. I have mastered that one. But Samuel brought him right back to the point. He said, If you really have obeyed, then what does this mean? I want you to know that God isn't pleased at all with these animals He told you to utterly destroy and you have brought for sacrifice. There is one thing God wants. It isn't sacrifice. It is obedience.

It is amazing how today the worldliest things are considered to be ok if they are used for a religious purpose. So that I don't step on anyone's toes, I ought to talk about something like bingo. I don't know much about bingo. I don't know how it is played. I do know there are thousands and thousands of people playing bingo games in connection with one of the great churches of this country. People flock there by the hundreds and thousands to play bingo, and the church gets the benefit of it.

In some states the officers of the state say one of their problems in trying to deal with gambling is that some churches are in the business of gambling and teaching their people to gamble. We say that is awful, and it is. But do you know what the people in those churches say? They say it is all right. The people have a good time and the benefits go to the church for religious purposes. That makes it all right.

We wouldn't do that, would we? No, we wouldn't. But friends, there are a good many other things we need to think about.

Several years ago I had the privilege of taking home a minister from the General Conference who has spent many years in the service of this denomination. He was preaching for the General Conference before I was born. He is still a witness for this truth. He has traveled around the world a number of times.

As we journeyed along he said, "Bill, when I started out to preach we pointed out some things that were going on in the various protestant churches in the way of entertainment and the kind of entertainment they were having in the churches, and we said that is Babylon. We need to understand once and for all that bringing the world into the church and sprinkling some holy water on it doesn't help either the world or the church. It doesn't do it at all.

"We need to understand once and for all that bringing pagan and infidel literature into a Christian school and sprinkling some drops of holy water on it doesn't improve the book. It doesn't make Christian education out of worldly education. If

we take the methods of the world in appealing appetite and passions to the lust for pleasure or the lust for position and try to harness that to the task of raising money for the cause of Christ, that kind of holy water doesn't change anything."

Read the story here in 1 Samuel 15. Samuel was arguing that it was all right to bring all those herds of sheep and cattle from the Amalekites that God said destroy, and use them to sacrifice at the tabernacle. God said, Is that what I told you to do? Well no, it isn't exactly what You said, but then we thought it would be nice. We thought it would be a good thing. We thought. We thought. And what's the harm. After all, if they are all going to be slaughtered, why not use some of them for sacrifices at the tabernacle?

I suppose some of the people who stood by thought Samuel was awfully strict, but the stern prophet said:

"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" 1 Samuel 15:22

Dear friends, there is nothing God appreciates more than obedience. In fact, without obedience there is no present we can give Him that will interest him. Obedience. Have you learned it? I trust God will teach it to us. I will tell you now the reason why I put this lesson first:

"One of the first lessons a child needs to learn is the lesson of obedience. Before he is old enough to reason, he may be taught to obey" *Education*, page 287.

Did you ever see a parent try to reason with a little child to get it to understand what it was to do and why it was to do it? Well, before that child is old enough to undertake anything of that kind he can be taught to obey.

I found same sentence with just one word different. I have pondered over why it is one way in one statement and another way in the other. I think you will see the reason:

"Before the child is old enough to reason, he must be taught to obey" *Counsels to Teachers*, page 111.

The book *Education* says he *may* be taught to obey. That assures us, thank God, it can be done. That is encouraging, isn't it? Some people don't know that. They think it can't be done. But this sentence in *Counsels to Parents* says it *must* be done, and it *must* be done before the child is old enough to reason.

If you were the Devil, what would you do about it? I will tell you what the Devil has done about it. He has persuaded millions of parents that the time for children to learn obedience is when they get old enough to understand what it is all about. That didn't come from above. That came from beneath. That is part of the wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God. That is part of the wine of Babylon which

makes men so drunk they don't see straight nor think straight nor walk straight. Let's look at these two sentences again:

"Before he is old enough to reason he may be taught to obey" *Ibid.*

"Before the child is old enough to reason, he must be taught to obey" *Ibid.*

The next question I want to ask is this: Suppose that got skipped when you were one or two or three years old. Do you suppose there could be anyone here who is fifteen years old or fifty years old that somehow that part of their education got skipped? Do you suppose that could have happen?

I am not going to ask you to raise your hands, but if there is anyone brave enough to raise your hand and say you are afraid somehow or another that got skipped in your education, I think if everyone else was equally honest and brave you would have a lot of company. That doesn't make it any better.

This thing has been growing on me as I think about it. This thing isn't something like algebra. When you came along to high school and somehow you didn't get algebra, or at least it didn't get you as you went through, you can go on through life, and in 900 cases out of a 1,000 you couldn't tell the difference in 10, 20, or 30 years, and nobody else could.

This subject is not like that. This is something that unless you learn it when you are one and two and three years old you have got to learn it somewhere between there and the pearly gates. You will have to learn it just as the child is supposed to learn it, without understanding or knowing or being able to comprehend all the reasons. And unless you learn it that way, you haven't learned it.

Dear parents, if you have to reason or argue or plead or beg, or have a session with your child to convince his reason, he has not yet learned what obedience is.

Don't misunderstand me. There is a place for reason. That is implied in what I have read. I am not trying to suggest there is no place for reason. Reason comes a great deal into this matter of guidance, which is the second lesson. But that is not my subject tonight.

God is not unreasonable, and he does not want parents and teachers to be unreasonable. Unreasonable parents and unreasonable teachers are a misrepresentation of the character of God. But the first lesson to be learned is not how to reason. The first lesson is how to obey. If you haven't learned that you are not ready to reason. That's right. You will reason crooked. One of the great reasons that many people don't understand God's will is because they have not come to the point of fully surrendering to that will before they know what it is. The first lesson is the lesson of obedience.

Let's turn to John 13. Here is that interesting experience of Peter and his brethren in the upper room. One of them should have washed Jesus' feet and the

feet of the others, but none would do it. Jesus quietly got up from the table, picked up the basin, poured water into it and began to wash the disciple's feet.

"Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet" John 13:6-8.

Did Jesus at once know He would need to reason with Peter and explain it all to him so He could get Peter's cooperation? Look at your text. I don't know how old Peter was, but he wasn't three years old or six years old. I have seen people who love the Lord and love their children doing exactly the opposite of what Jesus did. I have seen it dozens of times.

What did Jesus say? Did He begin to reason with Peter and to convince Peter of the necessity of it and the reasons for it so that Peter would cooperate? Nothing of the kind.

"Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" John 13:6-8.

He had already told him, "What I do thou knowest not now." Peter didn't understand it. He certainly knew what Jesus was doing. He knew it in that sense. But he didn't understand. He didn't see any sense in it.

Did you ever tell your child something the child saw no sense in? Oh, yes lots of times. Incidentally, one of the reasons children need parents is to decide for them things they don't have sense to decide for themselves. That's why the disciples needed Jesus. And all through eternity God is going to tell us many things without proving them. He is going to command many things to us without explaining them. But all who go there will already have learned the lesson of obedience. So when God says something, they will do it.

If God told me to eat a watermelon and I had never eaten one before, I would be delighted as soon as I did what He said, wouldn't I? Everything God ever told a child to do would bring delight to the child if he did it. That's what makes God's law. It is the law of love, and love is seeking forever to please, benefit, and bless. Your God is that kind of God.

Oh friends, I pray God will teach us these kinds of lessons. I don't know which lesson, or which phase of the lesson is more important tonight. The lesson of parents training their children to learn obedience, or the lesson to us who didn't learn it when we were one and two and six years old, and have to learn it now.

You dear young people in your teens, have you learned to obey? Can the dean count on you to obey rules in the dormitory? Can the teacher count on you to carry out instructions in the classroom?

You older people at home, whatever your position or place, are you obedient? Don't think anyone is exempt. I'm not. I know you are not. There is someone I must obey. When many of us get older than children our problem is increased because we have more people to obey than the child does. I would be willing to trade with the children at times and just have one or two people tell me what to do.

One of the great reasons why God is trying to help parents teach these lessons to the children is because if the children learn while they are little they will do that same way with God when they grow older. So to the little child, the parent stands in the place of God. We have been told that whenever a parent finds it necessary to give a direct command to a child, the penalty for disobedience should be just as unvarying as the laws of nature. That's quite a thing, isn't it? Yes.

I take this book. I have it in my hands. I am going to drop it. What will happen? It will fall. How far will it fall? To the floor. Are you sure? Does anyone have any doubt about it?

What would you think if I dropped it and it fell about three inches and hung there. I would like to illustrate it for you but I can't. It won't cooperate. If I drop it what happens? It falls to the floor. And if the floor were a hundred feet down, it would fall a hundred feet. If it were a thousand, it would fall a thousand.

As Brother Comstock was bringing me home from Mexico last month he took me above Tuxtla to a place where a river has cut its way through a great mountain. The cliffs are so steep and the canyon so narrow that one can stand there and throw a rock down 3,000 feet. It isn't because Brother Comstock is so strong he could throw that far. All he had to do was get the rock out over the river and gravity took over. What is gravity? It is one of God's laws. If it had been a mile or two miles the answer would have been the same.

My dear parents, God desires that when you issue a direct command the penalty for disobedience, or the results in case of obedience, are to be as unvarying as the laws of nature. If we would think about this, some of us wouldn't issue so many direct commands. And a child that is educated that way learns that two and two are always four, never five and never three. Always. No exceptions. Always four.

I am not giving you a study tonight on child training. I am giving a study on training for everyone. I am making an appeal to you young people in your teens and twenties, whether you are single or married, and you older ones. Have you learned to obey? What about you folks in your thirties and forties and fifties and sixties? Do you feel that somehow you have gotten to the place where you don't have to obey? Oh friends, I long for the time to come when every one of God's children has mastered this lesson of obedience.

Notice the following statement:

"The Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an

opposite course. It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks from God"
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, page 69.

This bears on the matter of guidance. But notice how it is tied up and tied into the question of obedience.

"We must resist and conquer inclination, and obey the voice of conscience without parleying or compromise, lest its prompting cease and will and impulse control" *Ibid.* page 69

Unless we learn the lesson of obedience something will happen to our conscience and we won't be guided right. Balaam had that experience. Balak sent his ambassadors down and said, Balaam, I want you to come and curse Israel for me. Balaam said, Well, I will have to ask the Lord about that.

Sounded good, didn't it? The Lord spoke to Balaam and said, Now what about these people. Who are they anyway? He told the Lord, and the Lord said, Now listen. You shall not curse those people for they are blessed.

That should have settled it, but it didn't. Balaam finally get over there. And while it is true that God took the words out of his mouth and put some other words in, Balaam kept on because he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and he finally did bring a curse on Israel. He learned how to do it another way. But he died in battle and will be lost.

My friends, it is a dangerous thing to try to get guidance from God without settling first the question of obedience. God may let you have your way. He let Balaam go over there. All along the way He tried to do things to help Balaam stop and think. He even had the ass speak to Balaam. You would think that of all things something as unusual as hearing a donkey speak would stop a man. But not Balaam. There was something he wanted to do.

When he got over to Moab, he had the altars built and the sacrifices made and went to seek guidance from the Lord. Oh that God may help us to understand that prayer is not a substitute for obedience. Sacrifice is not a substitute for obedience. Nothing is a substitute for obedience. There is just one thing God wants. It is obedience.

You say, I thought God wanted love.

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments" John 14:15.

Mary, a little girl was telling her mother how much she loved her. The mother said, "I am so glad you love me because I need your help this morning to wash the dishes."

Mary said, "But mother, I don't love you that way."

Older people aren't that honest. Jesus said, If you love Me, what? Now I want to tell you something. Unless obedience comes from love it is not obedience. Remember that. That's why God doesn't force anyone. True obedience comes from love. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

This matter we are studying tonight is so important that when Adam and Eve broke one of God's commands, Jesus had to come down here and suffer and die in order to atone for those transgressions. That's what it cost. And when we look at Calvary, there and there only will we learn the importance of this lesson of obedience.

Never think Jesus went to the cross and died so we wouldn't have to obey. He went to the cross and died to bring us back to God and the way of obedience. He went to the cross and died to atone for our past disobedience, and to put within our hearts such deep love that we would say, Oh Lord, if You love me enough to die for me because I broke your command and broke your law, then Lord help me to love You enough to do what you say.

How many of us would like to send Him the word tonight that we are heart to heart with Him? Thank the Lord.

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