

Educated or Uneducated

#0144

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 9, 1979

Let's turn to Matthew 28:18–20, the Gospel commission. Jesus had gathered His disciples together shortly before He left this earth:

“And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world”
Matthew 28:18–20.

What did Jesus in this commission tell His disciples to do? What job did He give them? What was the verb? Go and teach. Go and teach. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations...” Did they do it? Oh, yes. Several years later, Paul testifies that the Gospel had been communicated to every creature under Heaven. What a marvelous program.

My question is: who were these men to whom Christ gave this commission? Were they educated or uneducated? Well, whichever one you answer, you're correct. And unless you answer “both,” you are *not* correct. You're not accurate. To say that they were uneducated and leave it there misses the whole point. But to say that they were educated and leave it there may cause a misunderstanding.

Let's take a look at two of the leaders of them in Acts 4:13. This was just a few weeks after the verse we've read as our text tonight. Christ has gone to Heaven. In response to His command, the disciples have gathered in the Upper Room and stayed there until every difference was gone. They were of one accord in one place, the Holy Spirit came upon them.

They began to witness. Soon there were thousands of Christians right there in Jerusalem, and, of course, this made trouble. Let me tell you, friends, trouble is not a sign necessarily that things are going wrong. It may be wonderful evidence that things are going *right*. I long for that kind of evidence, what do you say? Or should I put it this way: I long for the experience, personally and in the church, which will bring about those scenes which are a repetition of Pentecost and the aftermath.

So, Peter and John are now summoned before the leaders of the nation. They're called to give an account of what they have been doing. Acts 4:13:

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” Acts 4:13.

You see why I say that to leave out the fact that they were uneducated would be an inaccurate picture. This plainly states that they were what kind of men? Unlearned and ignorant. Both of them were what trade? Fishermen, and fishermen were not given a special scholastic training to do that. But the rest of the verse here indicates that these men were *not* uneducated. They gave evidence of a culture, an ability, a poise, an efficiency, an effectualness that caused their enemies to marvel. And they took knowledge of them that they had what? Been with Jesus. That was their education, my friend. That was their education.

Let us never get the idea that there is something holy about a lack of education and culture. No. On the other hand, let us never get the idea that there's something holy about conventional education. No. They took knowledge of these men that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him. In the book *Counsels to Teachers*, page 11, the opening page, I read:

“There is no education to be gained higher than that given to the early disciples, and which is revealed to us through the word of God” *Counsels to Teachers*, page 11.

Can you get, then a higher education than Peter and John got? No, impossible. Would you like to have that? Suppose you were living back there in the time of Jesus, and an invitation was extended to you to attend His school. Would you go, or would you raise certain questions? Would you listen to certain reports, rumors, or statements of fact concerning the lacks and deficiencies of that school? We might listen to questions like this: “Well, where is the library? Where is the administration building? Where is the faculty, and who make up the faculty?” So they might go on with a long list of questions, which, in their place, are perfectly proper. What I'm saying is that measured by conventional criteria, Christ hardly had a school.

So we need to get our vision focused, with the help of the glasses that the Word of God gives us, and behold a school, *the* school, the greatest school since Eden, as Jesus gathers twelve men and others associated with them and teaches them through study and demonstration, through personal association, day in and day out, week in and week out, for 3 ½ years.

Educated or uneducated—they're both. These verses we've read make that abundantly clear, don't they, friends? Yes. And remember: there is no education to be gained higher than that given to the early disciples and which is revealed to us through the Word of God.

Let me hasten to add something else that needs to be emphasized. The superficial mind supposes that an education such as we're describing here is one in which you don't have to be so particular as if you were in conventional education. Decidedly, the opposite is the truth, friend—decidedly the opposite. In conventional education, your grade may be determined by a curve which represents the consensus or understanding of your group, your peers, and if you're average, you pass. Or in other systems of grading and evaluation, if you can answer seven or eight or nine questions out of ten, then you may pass, depending upon the system of grading and what the questions are. But in the type of education that we're noting, what the understanding student aims at is 100 percent, and the final examination requires you to pass with 100 percent.

So let us disabuse our minds, if they need be, of the idea that this type of education makes room for more slovenly, sloppy, careless work. It is not so. This type of education calls for a thorough scholarship. It calls for deep study, earnest endeavor, to *master* the subject. God wants us to be *masters* of what we enter into.

Now, it's true that He hasn't called all of us to exhaust *all* that could be learned in every area. I doubt if there are many here that He's called to get ready to take some moon trips. But, my dear friends, He has called upon us to get ready to take a trip far beyond the moon and beyond the stars. And the education that is called for is so much higher than conventional education as Heaven is beyond the moon and the visible stars.

Oh, I pray that in this audience tonight, you who call yourselves students (and all the rest, for we are all students in life's school, whether we call ourselves that or not), I pray that all of us may sense anew our great privilege, our exalted opportunity, and the tremendous challenge that's before us, friends, to get the *type* of education that Peter and John got.

You see, friends, there are two great mistakes, two great errors, two great ideas that people have that are simply not so. One is that unless you have a conventional education, you can't do much. The other half of that, the other side of that coin, is the other error, and that is that if you get sufficient of that conventional education, you *will* be a success. It guarantees it; both are erroneous, friends. The disciples are proof that men can be taken from the common walks of life, never see the inside of some great educational institution, but come out truly successful, even recognized as such by their enemies. But this does not mean, friends, that *any* amount of education, even the true kind, can fit me for God's work.

What was it that enabled these disciples to give their witness with such power? It was the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were trained for 3 ½ years. They were fitted, enabled, by the gift of the Spirit of God. God intends that in true education, we shall learn certain facts and develop certain skills, but along with it, deep in our hearts every day, in learning the lesson better, we recognize that of ourselves we are not able.

Jesus Himself set us this example. Turn, please, to John, the seventh chapter. Here, the great Teacher set us the example of how to learn and how to teach. John 7:14:

“Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught” John 7:14.

The temple, you will remember, was not only the center of the religious system of the Jews, it was the center of education. And Jesus dared to go up to that temple and teach.

“And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” John 7:15.

How can He *teach* when He has never been *taught*? And I catch in these words from those religious and educational leaders a double marvel, a double wonder. They wondered that He has, shall I say, ‘the nerve’ to set Himself forth in such a circle. Maybe He might go out in the hills somewhere and talk to the hillbillies. But the very idea of coming here to our religious and educational center and setting Himself forth as a teacher—what audacity!

But there’s something deeper than that. They marveled that he was using the vernacular, and that He was getting away with it that He was succeeding, that He was getting attention which they utterly failed to get, that He was admired by the *people*. As they hung on His words, they were blessed by that marvelous flow of light and life and knowledge and wisdom.

Oh friends, what an experience it must have been to listen to Jesus! To listen to Jesus! No wonder then that they said, “How can it be that this Man, this carpenter of Nazareth who has never gone through the conventional educational system, how can it be that He *teaches*, and that He teaches *here*? How can it be?”

“Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent me” John 7:16.

Now, don’t rush through that verse. Let’s ponder awhile. Let’s, as the cow does, let’s chew the cud a bit. Let’s think of what Christ is saying. My teaching, My doctrine, what I’m telling you—this is not from Me; it’s from the One that sent Me.

You see, when Jesus came to earth, He emptied *Himself*. He left with the Father the glory that had been His in the courts above. While on earth, He was the Son of God as truly as when He was in the courts of the Temple in Heaven; nevertheless, having emptied Himself, He acquired knowledge as boys and girls today may acquire knowledge. It’s vital that we understand this.

Don’t misunderstand me; there were some things that Jesus in His earth-life did as the divine Son of God that no human being ever *could* do. That isn’t what I’m

discussing. I'm discussing this fact: that having emptied Himself, taking our humanity, He climbed the ladder of knowledge as you and I may climb it. He learned by listening and looking and observing and thinking. He learned to read as children today can learn to read. He learned to study the Bible as children today can learn to study the Bible. He learned to observe nature as children today may learn to observe nature. He pondered over the experiences of life, the problems of life, as young men and women today may ponder over their problems. And in all these things He was looking (mark the point!) He was looking to His Father to teach Him. So He could say, "My teaching is not Mine but His that sent Me." My Father sent Me, and My Father has taught Me these things."

In the hills of Nazareth, in the carpenter shop, and in the home, Jesus had been treasuring up these wonderful treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He had committed to memory whole books of the Old Testament. He did not have to carry around with Him a package of scrolls. He had it right up here. He had studied the book of nature. He was acquainted with lily and rose, fish and sheep. He was acquainted with mountains and hills and valleys, with the rising sun, the rain, the clouds. And from all these He had gathered, taught by His Father, precious, wonderful lessons of wisdom, of power, and an understanding of the love of His Father.

And those lessons that He had learned from His childhood and youth, He was now communicating in Galilee, in Judea, and in the very courts of the temple. And the multitudes marveled, "How can it be?"

Oh, He said, I'll tell you how it can be. You can get it just where I got it.

Oh, can it be, friends, today? Can you and I get it where He got it? Yes, we can. Thank God. If we are willing to climb Peter's ladder and add to our faith virtue and so on. If we learn these lessons from the Bible and from nature and from the experiences of life, we too can be educated as Heaven measures education. But it requires, as I've indicated, a devotion, a dedication, a focused endeavor far beyond what conventional education calls for.

There's no spirit in this school of merely 'getting by' and seeing how low a grade one can get and still pass. No, no, nothing of the kind! Those who understand what Jesus is teaching want to get *all* He has for them, friends, not so they can pass some human examination, but because they *long* to know His will and to follow it. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst for this kind of education, this kind of knowledge, this kind of life and light, for they shall be filled. Oh, I thank God for it, don't you?

Another reason I love what we're studying tonight is that it gives a place for everybody. If we were to pass around some slips of paper here tonight so that everyone, young and old, could write down how many grades of school you've, there'd be quite a variation, wouldn't there? Yes. Quite a variation. Not merely with the children, but with the older people as well.

I remember an experience I had nearly 40 years ago. In fact, it was 40 years ago. My wife and I had the privilege of taking a six-week special course up at what was called then the Advanced Bible School, and later, it came to be known as a seminary. And having been out in the field for a number of years in evangelistic work, it was a great privilege for us to go up to Washington and spend six weeks sitting at the feet of some of our experts in the study of the Bible. We enjoyed it very much.

One class that I shall never forget was taught by Elder Shuler in evangelism. Elder Shuler began his work close by here in Tennessee. He told me later, as I became better acquainted with him, that he came out of the coal mines as a young man. He had never been to high school, let alone college. He said, "You know, Brother Frazee, I never even had the opportunity to go through campaigns with some other ministry."

Somehow, in the providence of God (this was an unusual experience), he was pressed into the work as a layman. And after he'd had success as a layman, the brethren asked him to give his time to the ministry. He finally became one of the greatest evangelists in North America, bringing thousands to the Lord. But he was a deep student of the Bible. Any of you that have read his books (and by the way, he's still, although in his 90s, active in training ministers. He's called to go around and speak to our ministers.)

At the time which I was speaking of, 40 years ago when he was teaching there at the seminary, he had what was perhaps one of the greatest positions (if you want to call it a position) that any minister could have: training our ministers in the art of evangelism. And yet, as I tell you, he came out of the coal mines, and, as a layman, learned to study the Bible and bring other people into the truth. Now, when I think of his experience, I think of this wonderful statement. You'll find it in *Gospel Workers*, page 488:

"God can and will use those who have not had a fair education in the schools of men. A doubt of His power to do this is to manifest unbelief. It is limiting the omnipotent power of the One with whom nothing is impossible. Oh, for a less of this uncalled for distressful caution. It leaves so many forces of the church unused. It closes up the way so that the Holy Spirit cannot use men. It keeps them in idleness and less anxious to labor in Christ's lines. It discourages from the work many who would become efficient laborers together with God if they were given a fair chance" *Gospel Workers*, page 488–489.

Yes, my brother, my sister, wherever you are on the educational ladder, God has a work for you to do. He has a work for you to do *now*. Jesus did not despise education. He would have been glad to get those well-schooled scribes up there in Jerusalem, but it touched their pride to think that here was One teaching that hadn't been through their routine.

But finally, there was one of those leaders that God got hold of. Do you remember what his name was? Paul, Saul, later called Paul. And there was no one that had more education than Paul; no one who had been better trained in the schools of that time than that apostle. And God met him there on the Damascus road and revealed Himself to Paul, and took him out into the deserts of Arabia for a while to *unlearn* some of the lessons that he had learned and to learn to interpret aright the facts that he *had* stored in his mind in the school of Gamaliel, in the study of the Scriptures. And under the inspiration of the prophetic gift, the apostle Paul became one of the greatest thinkers, the greatest theologians, the greatest religious leaders of all time.

And God forbid that any of us, who may be lacking in what the world calls education, God forbid that we should ever speak some contemptuous word, some indiscrete word, some careless word that would cause people to believe that there's something about this program that despises education. God keep us from that.

Are you acquainted with this statement in *Volume 5*, page 82, of the *Testimonies*?

“God will work a work in our day that but few anticipate. He will raise up and exalt among us those who are taught rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the outward training of scientific institutions. These facilities are not to be despised or condemned...” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 82.

It should never be the mark of this program that those who are in it despise or condemn scientific and literary excellence. This is a mistake, dear friends.

“These facilities are not to be despised or condemned. They are ordained of God, but they can furnish only the exterior qualifications” *Ibid*.

May I suggest to you, friend, that if somewhere along the line you missed thorough training in reading, in spelling, in arithmetic, if somewhere along the line you missed thorough training in how to communicate your thoughts that you get from reading and studying the experiences of others, in writing and in speaking, in private and in public, then you have the glorious opportunity where you are, no matter what your age—20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80—you have the opportunity now of further education.

God wants you to keep improving. How to do it? Study and practice, observe and communicate. Plead with God on your knees. Study the Bible. Study other books that God has given to help you to become truly educated. And then as fast as you learn, communicate. We hear somebody saying something over here, or we hear somebody speak, or we hear somebody teach. We think, “Ah, that's easy for them.” Ah friends, back of it all is earnest effort over a period of years.

God is not in the business of supernaturally making up for laziness, a lack of study, a lack of practice. God help every one of us to realize something of the exalted privileges, the grand possibilities that are open to everyone: the boys and girls, the youth, the older ones. Let us become educated, what do you say? And remember, there is no education to be gained higher than that given to the early disciples.

Let me give a very practical suggestion. It's found in this book *Christ's Object Lessons*. This is one way in which people can educate themselves. This is page 343:

"The cultivation of the intellect need not be prevented by poverty, humble origin, or unfavorable surroundings. Only let the moments be treasured. A few moments here and a few there, that might be frittered away in aimless talk; the morning hours so often wasted in bed; the time spent in traveling on trams or railway cars, or waiting at the station; the moments of waiting for meals, waiting for those who are tardy in keeping an appointment—if a book were kept at hand, and these fragments of time were improved in study, reading, or careful thought, what might not be accomplished" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 343–344.

Just fragments of time; a few minutes here and a few minutes there. Keep what at hand? A book. I won't ask you to raise your hands, but I wonder how many are doing that. This is a practical suggestion.

A resolute purpose, persistent industry, and careful economy of time, will enable men to acquire knowledge and mental discipline which will qualify them for almost any position of influence and usefulness" *Ibid*.

May it please God, there's someone here tonight that's going to start doing that, that hasn't been doing it. It could be you. Will you do it, friend?

Here is another practical suggestion. This is in the book *Counsels to Teachers*, an instruction that the prophet gave to our students over in Avondale, that pattern school that was established in Australia, and how *they* could improve, page 549:

"Whenever you are listening to an interesting discourse, take notes and mark down the passages that the minister uses, so that you can review the subject carefully. Then after faithful study you will soon be able to give a synopsis of the discourses, in the form of Bible readings, to some who do not come to our meetings" *Counsels to Teachers*, page 550.

Now, some are doing that here tonight. Some of you aren't. I'm not going to make you—I couldn't if I wanted to, could I? I wouldn't want to if I had the power. But friends, I can testify from personal experience that it's a wonderful way to learn things.

When I was a little barefoot boy, I used to sit on the front seat of a sawdust-covered floor and hear men like Luther Warren, and Dr. Truman, and Meade McGuire, and others, and take notes. Boys and girls, if you're old enough to write, you're old enough to take notes. You can form the habit. Even now, after all these years, I always have a notebook with me. And again and again, when I'm listening to somebody, I catch a reference or way of stating something and I say, "I want that," so I put it down in my notebook. I'm a collector. I recommend it to you. It has a divine authority back of it.

Two practical suggestions, then, for education: One is to keep a book at hand where you can use fragments of time—waiting for meals, waiting for anything—to improve the time. The second is what? Take notes. Take notes.

Somebody says, "But Brother Frazee, that isn't for me. If I try to take notes, then I lose what the speaker is saying, and I get all mixed up."

Well, I'll tell you something, friends. The first time you tried to walk, you got all mixed up. The first time you tried to talk, you got all mixed up. But thank the Lord, you didn't stop either one. And you don't have to stop trying to take notes just because you get mixed up. Don't try to get down everything the speaker says. No. That's not notes. You'd need a tape recorder for that. And there are people in this wonderful age of electronics that think that because the tape recorder is taking it down, they don't need to take notes. But bless your heart, friend, it's what happens to your mind while you're taking notes. It isn't just that you have something to refer to. When you're taking notes, you have to listen to hear what's being said, and you have to decide what's the important point that you want to remember. And that's selectivity. That focus is part of the discipline. Just getting down the reference is fine.

Take it easy. What I mean is don't try to become an expert overnight. Just start in. There's somebody that's going to do that right here, tonight. There's somebody that came in these doors with no intention of taking notes, but you're going to start right now. You're going to begin with a piece of paper and a pencil to write down some reference or some fact. Now I'm going to help you.

What was our first text? Matthew 28:18–20. What did it say? "Go and teach." Now, if I were taking notes on that, I would put down Matthew 28:18–20—Jesus said, "Go and teach." Now that's enough to bring back to my mind quite a number of things that Jesus said, "Go and teach."

Then we went over to Acts, which chapter? Four, and which verse? The 13th verse. We found that those people that Jesus sent to teach were considered to be what kind of people? Ignorant and unlearned men. Were they really uneducated? No, because they caused their enemies to marvel, and they took knowledge of them, that

they had what? Been with Jesus. Now, you take notes on that in your own way. If I were doing it, I might put: "Ignorant and unlearned men—been with Jesus."

Then we were over in John, the seventh chapter, and we found out that Jesus Himself set the example. And although He wasn't considered educated, He taught because He depended on whom? His Father. I pray that God will help every one of us to be really educated.

Now I'll tell you a little secret, friends. A little secret. It's a *big* secret. It'll only take a minute or two to say it. All that we learn in study and in taking notes will not help us very much unless we communicate it. Even a small amount of knowledge that we share with others will develop us. But vast amounts of information, great quantities of truth, will never develop us unless we share them with others. It's in the water and not on the land that men learn to swim. It's in sharing the good things of God with others. And so this statement that I was reading here in *Counsels to Teachers*, that little suggestion of the prophet to the young people at Avondale to take notes, was preliminary to and preparatory to their going out into the community and sharing with the people what they got. Oh, yes. So when you take notes, use the notes to help others.

Some of you are sitting here tonight, but there are people at home that weren't here tonight, either because they were sick or because they were on duty or for whatever reason. If you'll take notes and share with them, when you go home tonight or tomorrow, what you got tonight, *you* will be better educated 24 hours from now than you are now. Do the same thing tomorrow morning in Sabbath School and church. Train yourself to be watching for some fact, some reference, some truth that you can communicate to others, and *do* it before the sun goes down. Make it your business, friends, to be a channel, not a Dead Sea but a Sea of Galilee, receiving the waters from above and passing them on below. *This* is Christian education.

May God bless you all as you let Jesus make you what He did for those disciples back there—make you men and women that cause this world to understand the light of truth, the light of love, and the power of the Spirit of God.

Dear Father, bless to our understanding these wonderful principles. By beholding Jesus, may we become like Him. We ask it in His name, amen.

[Testimony service]

Precious Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing. Send us out to keep learning, to keep on teaching others, sharing with them what Thou dost share with us. We ask it in the name of the One who lived for us, who died for us, who pleads for us, and who's coming for us. Amen.

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