

# **JESUS' PEDAGOGY**

by

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## **Motivation**

As a lifelong teacher and, during the last years, a reader of The Urantia Book, I want to convey some ideas on Jesus' pedagogy to everyone participating in this Congress.

Since, in spite of all the fighting against the spreading of his teachings, these have survived and continue attracting many people's attention and love, I—that have endured the vacuum of my teachings oblivion by my students—, have always come to this question:

What were the pedagogical principles on the basis of which Jesus developed his life as a Master in our world?

With the further detail that The Urantia Book provides on the life and deeds of Jesus, the Son of Man on the earth, I have extracted the following aspects that I indulge myself in sharing here with you with fraternal affection.

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By taking certain elements from The Urantia Book, we can clearly identify some of those fundamental principles that pervade his educational work: both norms that He expressly recommends to his apostles and norms that we infer from facts of his life.

We will consider two parts of Jesus' pedagogy, which are:

The human objective of the education he offered and the methods he used to attain it.

### **1. Let's begin by identifying the human objective of the education that Jesus strived to convey to those who followed him:**

After the ordination of the twelve, Jesus consented to his fearful lieutenants' petition to delay the travel to Jerusalem to begin direct work, and stayed with them for another week in Galilee, answering to their questions and explaining them in different ways the essence of the mission that He had just put in their hands: to be the continuators of his own job of revealing the knowledge of the Father to men and leading them to become conscious, by faith, of the reality of their being children of that Father. On Thursday, after

the intermediate day of rest, as He saw that they had not fully assimilated his teachings, He decided to reinforce the fundamental aspects to Peter, James and John, so that they could convey their better understanding to their fellows, using their own words.

In such a special and dedicated course, besides making these three apostles aware of the actions and attitudes that they were to assume in the political aspects, in the economic affairs, in matters related to personal religion, and in social subjects, Jesus put the family as the very basis of the teachings on God. Nevertheless, the text makes clear that the family is an institution which does not survive to death, though undoubtedly, during the first years of life it performs a privileged role in generating the best capabilities to answer to the teachings on God and the Universe for as long as we live in the mortal flesh (Paper 140, page 1581).

Two papers later we find "The lesson on the family" in Bethany, where Jesus presented the idea that a kingdom was not the best way of illustrating the relations of men to the Father. "Jesus said: 'The people of another age will better understand the gospel of the kingdom when it is presented in terms expressive of the family relationship—when man understands religion as the teaching of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, sonship with God.'"

Once He had explained the seven fundamental features of family life, all of them referred to the human conditions of both the parents and the family's environment, the Master spoke for hours about the application of such features to the relations of man, the earthly son, to God, the Father in Paradise (Paper 142 pages 1603-1604).

If we advance to the Wednesday immediately before Jesus' death (in The Urantia Book), and we listen to his conversation with John Mark, the determined lad whose great and sincere desire and the boldness of requesting it, deserved him to accompany Jesus to the hills, where He wanted to go alone and commune with his Father, we find a dialogue entirely devoted to the subject of the family's influence on children during their childhood and youth. In this dialogue, Jesus emphasizes the effect of the parental influence on children's minds, when they are parents that love each other and love their children without spoiling them and, when the time

comes, they trust and allow them to take risks: "The child's subsequent life is made happy or unhappy, easy or difficult, in accordance with his early mental and emotional life, conditioned by these social and spiritual relationships of the home..." (Paper 177, page 1922).

From these three particular moments as well as from many of the examples with which He tried to illustrate the Father's love, mercy and providence, it can be deduced that, as for human education, Jesus endeavored to form his followers as men and women that would become fathers and mothers capable to rear their children in such a way that the new generation would have no difficulty in finding their path towards the free choice of faith and of their personal relation to God.

Of course, Jesus invited all his listeners to enter the Kingdom of the Father; that was his direct work; but his pedagogical action was intended to attain the human maturity that would turn them into balanced and loving parents; into parents that would facilitate the journey to freedom for their children so that those children could, in due time and without the counter-load of a cruel, sad, excessively controlled or overindulged and egocentric family experience, make the vital decision of accepting the divine sonship.

Jesus' insistence on the appropriate performance of the progenitors is totally coherent with what we read in the paper that refers to The Seven Mansion Worlds with respect to the ascending mortals being required the human experience of rearing either their own or other children, an experience that includes providing direction and maintenance till the pubescent age (Paper 47, page 531).

## **2. Let's consider now the Master's methods.**

At Edrei—during the Decapolis tour—Jesus expressed some principles of his pedagogy, as He gave instruction to preachers and believers. Those basic principles expressed by the Master were:

*Respect to the personality of man.* Not ever to force any listener to take the way of faith. Not to use overwhelming reasoning or mental superiority to bring men or women into the kingdom.

*Not ever to lessen or wound the listeners' self-respect.* If man loses self-respect and esteem, he becomes depressed and gets distant from accepting the truth of his most noble lineage as a child of God. Jesus never made fun of any of his listeners or followers, even though their questions were sometimes foolish or showing total lack of comprehension of his words.

*To avoid fearful resources to bring men or women into the kingdom.* It is a despicable practice to press a person with punishment threats for him or her to accept the truth that one wishes to teach.

*To teach that strong sensations and great emotions are not synonyms of guidance from the Spirit of God.* Feeling excited amidst a crowd listening a consolation message and emotionally vibrating to the calls to prayer or to praising songs, does not mean that such exalted feelings are necessarily representing either faith or, most important, the truth of God being within the person that is so emotionally excited.

*To talk clearly about the conflicts that will always be necessary to overcome in order to attain a true spiritual life.* To show that the struggle of those who enter the kingdom is a single one: the struggle of faith, the battle against doubt and incredulity. The fact that God does not bind nor forces anybody to believe in his loving fatherhood does not mean that He is some weak being that is easily cheated with empty words. The growth of spiritual life implies many fights with life in the flesh and its attachments, customs and requirements. It is a long way to walk through, but one that is progressively illuminated as the light of faith helps going to whoever sincerely wants to find God.

*Teaching the gospel is teaching friendship with God.* Showing that God is really a person that can be found by the honest man and with whom the latter can establish a true friendship, is the best form of conquering people to the life of faith.

*To preach the gospel as a good-news message that fills one's mind with enthusiasm and good humor.* If preaching the gospel that the Master conveyed to his apostles and disciples results in an increase of fear, or anguish or any other oppressing feeling, one of two possible things is undoubtedly happening: either the teacher has receded from Jesus' pedagogical principles—principles which can, by nature, lead only to an

increase of joy and taste for life—, or the disciple wants to have his or her own wrong thoughts and practices related to spiritual life to match Jesus' teachings without modifying anything. Such lack of coherence can lead only to a profound mental and spiritual unbalance.

*To teach the believers that they shall not lean on the unsafe logs of false compassion.* The teacher shall not indulge in self-compassion or to embrace the misleading practice of sharing regrets. It is a twisted habit to turn morbid curiosity—one's own or other's— into a false piety that leads many people to pay great attention to others' sorrowful stories, or to tell the personal ones in minute detail.

*Not to offer any consolation to those who succumb to their problems without striving to overcome them.* Offering consolation to someone who is simply undergoing the consequences of his or her own actions or omissions, by saying him or her that those bad experiences are sent by God, is giving consolation with a great falsity. God does not send any wrong. In general, wrongs are consequences of the actions taken by that who suffers them, though sometimes they can be accidents of which neither God nor anybody is to blame.

*To explain that faith does not prevent problems but it does help the believer to face them with no fear.* When the believer has problems or sufferings, the consolation of faith is the consolation of knowing that the Father is aware of such painful conditions and, all surely, He will be near to help him or her to find the way out (Paper 159, page 1765).

In very many occasions and with quite diverse motives, Jesus made gradually visible the elements of his educational methodology to men of all times. It is a methodology always oriented towards the mental and spiritual growth of his listeners and, as an immediate consequence of that growth, their attainment of a new joy of living which does not depend on economic or social or political circumstances, but solely on the profound sense of the divine sonship.

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This brief summary of the pedagogy of Jesus, the Master who joyfully talked with the ordinary people and did not despise the powerful; who always used the simple language so that his listeners could understand him; who

easily delegated the task of teaching the eternal truths to those who had not understood him but could attain that knowledge from their fellows..., this summary, I say, can be enlarged by each reader of The Urantia Book that is willing to take notice of the attitudes, words, smiles and good humor that the Master demonstrated along his journey through our world.