

Teaching the Way Jesus Taught

By Klaus Issler

Speaker 1:

Dr. Klaus Issler has requested, ah, as much time as possible this morning to share with us, ah, this is part of our, ah, once a semester faculty series. And this, ah, semester the spring semester this series is, sponsored by the Christian Education Department. So I'm going to give him the Reader's Digest condense, ah, condensed version, of an introduction. He is professor of Christian Education. He is director of the Doctor of Education program, which beginning this fall will be a PhD program, in Christian Education. Ah, he received his Bachelor's Degree from, Cal State Long Beach, Master's from UC Riverside, Master of Theology from Dallas Seminary, and PhD from Michigan State. Ah, he has, ah, ministry experience having served as an associate pastor. Ah, his wife of 24 years, he and his wife, Beth, live in, ah, Anaheim. I'd like to introduce Beth, at this time. Beth you were here earlier. There she is right back there.

[Speaker 1 claps]

Let's welcome her.

[Audience applause]

They have two children, one of whom is a freshman here at Biola, and another is a high school junior. At this time Dr. Bob Saucy's gonna come, and lead us in prayer, and then Dr. Klaus

Issler, ah, will bring us our first message, in our Spring Faculty Series, to be followed by professor, Richard Lydah, this Thursday day after tomorrow.

Bob Saucy:

Let us pray together. Father we thank you this morning for your Son, for sending him to die for us to give us salvation. We thank you Father also for the great hope that, in truth that he is coming again, to receive us unto himself. And Father, help us to live, in the light of both, of those comings these days, to live in the light of what he has accomplished for us and to live in the light, of the fact that he is coming again. We praise you and we thank you, that we can live this way because of you and your grace and love toward us. And now Father I want to pray especially, with all of my brothers and sisters for Klaus as he ministers to us. We thank you for him in our midst. We thank you Father for his obvious love for you, for his diligence of the task that you have called him to, for the mind that you have given to him. Um, we pray Father, that you would use him now in our midst. That you would just anoint him with your Spirit in a special way. Give him freedom as he speaks. May Father we be hearing *you* speak to us, and we pray Father that you would give us hearts that are open to learn, from his ministry today, that we might be better shaped to be your servants, to walk with you, and to glorify you. And so we commit this hour before us now and ask your blessing both upon Dr. Issler and upon us, as we worship in this way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Klaus Issler:

03:26 One of the greatest, barriers, to successful Christian living, is fixed, ideas. The false, fixed ideas that we hold dearly. Such fixed ideas, will hinder our learning, in seminary. Will limit, our ministry, to others. And such false fixed ideas will even, hinder, our walk with God, and growth toward Christian maturity. That's the nature of false, fixed, ideas. What am I talking about? I'm talking about the kind of ideas, that go to the very core, of our being. What I'll call our core, beliefs. These core beliefs, are not necessarily what we speak with our lips, and we may not always be aware what our core beliefs are. But our core ideas, are the foundation rails, upon which we live our life. They make up our view of reality, what we call our worldview. Now one way to find out, and identify what our core beliefs are, is to, observe how we act, because we always, live based upon our core beliefs. So for example, we respect, the law of gravity, and so we don't leap off, tall buildings. We believe that two, physical objects, cannot occupy the same, space, at the same time. And so we, swerve our car out of the way, when a car comes in our lane, at us. We come to appreciate the medical sciences, and so when we get fairly sick, we go see a doctor. And then there's a core belief that, brings us all to campus, each day. For at the very core of our being, we all believe that seminary education, is one of the best ways, to prepare for life long ministry, and so, here we are. Ah, but sometimes our core beliefs, are wrong. Sometimes a little wrong with ah, no significant lingering effects, on us. Ah, children always have these ah, misconceptions. Remember as a child that, my view of Sunday was that Sunday was the only day of the week, that it wouldn't rain, because it was "Sun" day.

[Audience laughter]

You could see my budding word study skills appearing here.

[Audience laughter]

Well, you could see, imagine my surprise as a child, the first I noticed, that it rained on Sunday. And then there was a birthday party I went to. Now my parents are from Germany and I too was born in Germany. We emigrated to, Toronto, Canada when I was a young child. And they tell me that my first language was German. Of course you can tell that by my, heavy German accent.

[Audience laughter]

Well they let me go to a, birthday party by myself and I was young in the neighborhood. When I came back they wanted to find out all about the party. And I told them at the party that, I ate, dog food. 'Course a little later I learned that, dog food, and hotdog are, not the same thing.

[Audience boisterous laughter]

Well, if you are working in, English as Second Language, will appreciate, our idioms. They are idio--, idiotic sometimes.

07:09 Well these kinds of fixed ideas are only embarrassing. But when our fixed ideas, are, very wrong, they have, devastating consequences for us, and for others. Today we do marvel at the blessings of moder--modern medical science. But, do you realize that only, less than 200 years

ago, one of the most common, medical treatments, was bloodletting. Now today we draw out blood to analyze and to store it for future use. But for most of human history, up till the mid-19th century, doctors would draw blood out, to cure the sick, and throw it away. Why? Because of a fixed idea, about how the human body functions. It was assumed that the body was essentially made up of four liquids or humors, and a healthy body had a balance of these four humors. When someone was sick, the diagnosis was easy, your humors out of, out of balance. What we do could do, is draw out some blood. Truth, sometimes is stranger than fiction. While our fixed ideas, can harm our physical lives, what about, our spiritual lives? What do fixed ideas do there? Well consider the experience of doubting, Thomas. He wasn't in the room, when Jesus appeared, to the other disciples. And despite the eyewitness accounts of his very close friends, he wouldn't budge, from this fixed idea. What was that? When a person, dies, they're dead, and they don't come back to life. But even Thomas had seen two people, come back to life, during, his ministry. Ideas, truly have, consequences as our, colleague, Dr. Moreland continues to remind us. But, bad ideas, have, bad consequences.

09:12 This morning I want to talk to you about one of the ways that Jesus taught. And I want to propose to you, that a major characteristic, of Jesus' teaching, was dislodging, false, fixed, ideas. It was Dr. Willard who helped me see this insight a couple years ago. Although I've been teaching course on Jesus the Master Teacher for over 10 years now, but now I'm convinced that, Jesus' teaching, to correct, fixed ideas, is an important key to understanding his earthly ministry. Here's how Dr. Willard explains it, in his recent book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, which is largely a book about the teaching ministry of Jesus. I highly commend it to you. Quote, "Jesus corrects, a general assumption, or practice, thought to govern the situation at hand. He does this by pointing

out the case before him. It provides an exception, and shows the general assumption, or the practice, to be an unreliable guide, to life under God.” End of quote. Then he alludes to the, situation with the rich young ruler. After the ruler leaves, Jesus, notice, the disciples’ reaction, to Jesus’ comment. I’m gonna read from Mark 10:23, and ah, by the way, ah, I don’t have one main passage for this morning. What I’ll do is, be illustrating, different points from various passages. But Mark 10:23, says this, “And Jesus looking around said to his disciples, ‘How hard it will be, for those who are wealthy, to enter, the kingdom of God.’ And the disciples were, amazed, at his words.” Why? Because in the Old Testament economy, material blessing, riches was an indication of God’s favor, and so it was assumed, that a rich person was automatically close, to God. But Jesus challenges this fixed idea. But look how deeply engrained it is into the disciples by their, reaction to his second comment. Later on in verse 24, “But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And they were even, more astonished, and said to him, ‘Then who can be saved?’” Or in other words, if this is true, can anyone be saved? Willard goes on, quote, “By using the case at hand, Jesus simply upset, the prevailing assumption about God, and riches.”

11:40 Now I believe this notion that Jesus addresses, fixed ideas can help us appreciate some of the hard sayings of Jesus. What about in a society, that prizes community, and that, the family becomes the ultimate value. Jesus gives this, surprising statement in Luke 14:26, “If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot, be my disciple.” Surprising statement. It is a surprising statement that doesn’t shock us anymore, but it did his first hearers, hearers. And the

reason is because the Pharisees to us are the bad guys, but in that day they were the good guys. They are the people who sought God the most. They are the people who loved God's word. But Jesus attacks even that fixed idea. One example Matthew 5:20 in the Sermon on the Mount, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not, enter the kingdom of heaven." Shocking in that day. Not only were his s-sayings shocking but also his actions sometimes amazed, his crowd, and challenged fixed ideas. Ah, remember the woman at the well in John 4? Jesus is talking to the woman and the disciples come, after they'd gotten, the food from the, fast food place. And at this point verse 27, and at this point his disciples came, and there's that word again, they marveled, that he had been speaking with a woman. Yet no one said, ah, what do you seek? Or, why are you talking with her? Later on she leaves and then Jesus gives another surprising statement, to the disciples. Chapter 4 verse 31, "In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting him saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But he said to them, 'I have food, to eat, that you don't know about.' The disciples therefore were saying to one another, 'No one, brought him anything to eat did they?'" They're fixated on the, on the physical realities, and were blind, to spiritual realities that Jesus was talking about. Okay so Jesus uses, surprising statements, stories with unexpected turns, and actions that amaze his hearers, in order to confront, prevailing assumptions, and, to offer an opportunity, to embrace, a new, way of living.

14:12 Well let's consider another case study from Scripture in which we observe a fixed idea. The fixed idea is confronted, and then, the idea's changed. The case is going to involve the apostle, Peter. The beginning of our analysis will take place at the end, of Jesus' teaching ministry in the book of Acts. In Acts 1:8 we have the Great, Commission, given. "But you shall

receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you'll be my witnesses both in Jeru--, ah, Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and in the most remotest part of the earth."

Simple enough. But now to appreciate, the case study, you must, enter into Peter's experience, at this particular time in his life in Acts 1. Biblical characters, are real, people. So, this [*inaudible*], assumed that you are Peter. You are here in Acts 1. My question to you is, how did you as Peter, understand, what Jesus said, in Acts 1:8? And you say it's simple. Well it's the Great Commission, sharing the Good News with all the world. Okay I come back to you. What world, does Peter have in mind? Now to appreciate the background you need to know two things about Peter. We learn later in the book of Acts that Peter, has never eaten, anything unclean. That means for breakfast, no, bacon, and eggs. Lunch, no, BLT, bacon lettuce tomato sandwich. This was a kosher Jew who had kosher eating habits. Second point, further he never, has associated with any Gentile. He's never been in a Gentile house. Now consider it. Given these two particular core beliefs, what would you as Peter interpret, Jesus' commission? What world, did Peter have in mind? He had, in mind, the only world that he, knew all his life, the world of the Jews. And that conclusion is borne out by the actions of the apostles. Acts 1 through 7 its ministry [*inaudible*] them, to Jews only. Acts 8 we move to the Samaritans. But you won't see any Gentiles, they minister to. John Stott in his commentary makes this point, "It is difficult for us to grasp the impassible gulf, which yon in those days between Jews on the one hand, and the Gentiles including even God fearers, on the other." Okay, so continue, imagining that you are Peter, and try to enter into that cultural custom, the fixed idea of that day, as Peter must learn, a radical new way of living. Living, with Gentiles. Now the question becomes as Stott states in his commentary, "How would God, succeed, in breaking down Peter's, deep seeded, racial intolerance?" His deeply, fixed, ideas.

17:16 Well surprising things today. You may be surprised to learn, that God allowed Peter, and the apostles, and the believing church, to retain this fixed idea, for seven years. Seven more years until Acts, chapter 10. Would you turn there with me? We will spend a few moments in Acts chapter 10, to see this, event. So finally after seven years of ministry, only to Gentiles, God intervenes in a special way to help correct Peter's, core belief. Now the events of Acts 10 may seem to be, not that special. But we must realize that our place, our very place in Christ's body, depends upon this, event. Peter's change of heart, becomes a turning point, for the conversion, of you and me, the Gentiles. Acts chapter 10 verse 9 we'll begin. Peter's in Joppa. Joppa's a port about 35 miles northwest, of Jerusalem. He's had great ministry. He's seen the dead raised. Many have come to Christ. It's lunchtime now. He's hungry but he's on the rooftop praying. You know the story. The vision comes down, with mixed, animals, clean and unclean. Okay, three recorded phrases. One, "Arise Peter, kill and eat." Peter says, "Surely, not, Lord. I have never eaten anything unholy, or unclean." Third, "What God has cleansed, no longer, consider, unholy." While Peter's on the rooftop, the messengers from Cornelius, had arrived at the gate. They've come from Caesarea, from Cornelius who has received a vision. He's a Gentile, Roman, centurion. God answered his prayer, and God says, bring Peter to your house. While the messengers are there, Peter is still on the roof and he has no, idea, that in a few moments his life will radically change. Verse 17, "Now while Peter was greatly perplexed, in mind, as to what the vision, he had seen was about." Peter's mind, was in a whirl. What, is going on? He sure is hungry, ah, but not that hungry to eat unclean animals. A fixed idea, holds [*inaudible*] back. Okay comes the divine command verse 19, "While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit, said to him, 'Behold, three men are looking for you, but arise, go downstairs and accompany

them without misgivings, for I, have sent them, myself.” This emphatic authoritative statement prompts Peter’s obedience. But we’re gonna pass over the momentous change that takes place right then in verse 23, if you pass it. In verse 23, “And so he invited them in, and gave lodging.” What did Peter do? Imagine that you’re Peter. The first time you’ve had Peter in this, ah, Gentiles in the same house. What is your conscience telling you? This is uncomfortable. This is wrong. Peter probably tossed and turned in bed all night. It’s a difficult experience. We might entitle the movie, “Sleepless in Joppa.” Anyway.

[Audience laughter]

Next day the story moves on to Caesarea. It’s 30, 33, ‘bout 30 miles up the coast, and a port town, and here Peter, steps into the house of a Gentile, for the first, time, in his grown, life. F.F. Bruce says, “A couple of days previously, Peter would not have believed it possible, that he should find himself, in such company, beneath a Gentile roof, of all things.” Verse 28, Peter shares an honest reflection as to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is Jew to associate with a foreigner, or to visit him. Yet God has shown me that I should not call, any man unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising an objection.” Bingo! Insight number one. He’s drawn analogy from the vision, unclean animals, to the Gentiles. Let me suggest, why was he compelled to come? Yes explicitly, th-the text, talks about the Spirit giving him the command.

21:22 But consider a second thing. Where did, Peter receive his vision? In the city of Joppa.

Does any historical event come to mind, from Joppa? Does the name, Jonah, ring a bell? I cannot think that Peter had this in mind. This sense of Old Testament presence. Joppa was the place that Jonah left in the opposite direction from his commission, to the Gentiles. Could Peter been thinking, I don't want to be a, a Jonah? But he still hasn't got the full picture. Verse 29 the latter part. Peter says, a surprising thing, "And so I ask for what reason have you sent me?" What? Peter you've been preaching the Good News ta, ta, thousands. Are you speechless? Cornelius, shares his vision and then concludes in verse 33, "Now then, we're all here present, before God, to hear all that, has been commanded by the Lord." The light, goes on. A fixed, false idea, false in Peter's core belief. Verse 33, Peter says, oh, I get it! I most certainly understand now, that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation, Jew and Gentile, the man who fears him, does what is right, is welcome to him. Insight, number, two. God welcomes both Jew and Gentile. F.F. Bruce says, "This may be a basic truism to us, big deal. But it was a revolutionary, revelation, to Peter." Changing one's fixed idea is, is like that. Well following Peter's sermon something special takes place. Verse 44, "While Peter was still speaking, these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all of those who were listening to the message." And again, notice the reactions, of the, Jewish believers. "And all the circumcised believers, who had come with Peter were," there's that word again, "amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out, upon the Gentiles." The fixed idea had been challenged, and, defeated. One commentator calls this event, the pouring out the Spirit in Acts chapter 10, this is the Pentecost, of the Gentiles." In fact, Peter draws a same parallel between Acts 2 at Pentecost, and this, later on, in chapter 11:15, and 15:8. Now remember the events in Acts 10, take place seven years, from the ascension of Jesus, Acts 1. And you'll be surprised it's gonna take, nine, more, years, until the whole church affirms this

basic truth that we hold dear. A couple points to consider, from the case study. We all, can have, fixed, ideas. Even Peter the apostle, who was under the direct teaching ministry of the Lord, had, fixed ideas. Two, God, is patient, and will work with us, when we are willing, and ready, to be receptive. Three, this is an interesting one. Our fixed ideas, can effect, our interpretation, of Scripture. It's a sobering thought. Finally, fixed ideas can hinder, God's, work, in our lives, and are, have effect on our ministry to others.

25:12 Consider one more final case, of a fixed idea, but this time you'll be able to participate. Medical science does continue to amaze us with the advances, it ah, challenges various areas and conquers them. Consider one of the areas of organ, transplants. Now, routinely we are able to perform transplants to these kinds of organs, of kidneys, livers, lungs, even hearts. Okay, now assume, that in the distant future, it will be possible, to perform, successfully, a brain, transplant. Okay, hold off to your objections. Just think with me. Maybe the victims of Alzheimer's would be candidates for this kind of operation. Okay, what do you think about a, brain, transplant, as a Christian? Do you think there's anything morally wrong, about this type of operation, from a Christian perspective? Here's some thoughts for you to consider. I'll read a passage, that talks about what happens after we die. It makes a contrast between our life here on this earth, versus our life after death, in heaven, with the Lord, before we receive, our resurrection body. Second Corinthians 5:6, here's the part I'm looking at. Paul says, "While we are at home in the body, we are absent, from the Lord." Verse 8, "We prefer rather to be absent from the Lord", ah body, excuse me, "But we prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be present, with the Lord." The question, after we die will be, will be, we be conscious, when we are present, with the Lord?

Will we be thinking, even though we don't have a body, or a brain? And what about God, who's totally immaterial? As Dr. Willard says it, "For God, everything, is literally a no, brainer."

[Audience laughter]

What about angels? I believe we think, with our minds, and not with our brains. If that is the case, then the brain is just another organ, though very complex. Well, think about that later at home, and then, as you think about that, consider what kind of, core belief is being challenged by that kind of, thought experiment.

[27:33](#) Okay, back to my main point. Jesus, characteristically, confronts, fixed ideas, in his teaching ministry. And what particular, method he uses illustrates this very well. That'll be, use of parables. And I managed here in noting how the para-ble illustrates, this kinda characteristic. Let me read some excerpts from Grant Osborn's book, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. He catches these insights, very well. Quote, "Jesus' original purpose, was to unsettle his audience, to reverse their value system, and force them to rethink their religious, priorities. Parables, are an encounter, mechanism. The parables encounter, interpret, and invite the listener reader to participate, in Jesus' new, world, vision, of the kingdom. They are a speech event. It never allows us to remain neutral. They grasp our attention, and force us to interact, with the presence of the kingdom of Jesus, either positively, or negatively. Jesus presents a new possibility to his hearers, and moves them to the point of decision. The major way, by, that Jesus, forced decision, was to break, conventional lines in his parables. Time and again, a totally unexpected turn of

events startled the hearers, and forced them to consider, the deeper implications of the parable. The normal way of things was shattered by the parables' reverse of norms. And the hearer was forced to consider the kingdom reality, behind the image. For the kingdom truths, run, counter, to the world's ways. The same kind of parables exhibit an antithetical, structure. As Jesus' meaning, clashed, with the interpretation of his hearers, and forced them out of their religious, religious, their narrow religious framework. Unfortunately this reversal of expectations is often lost, on the modern reader, because we no longer have the background." End of quote. It seems we're moved from Jesus' time, and we've become so, so familiar with the gospels that I fear, we've tamed, and domesticated, Jesus' teaching. We miss that element of surprise. I [*inaudible*] the ah, concordance study with you. I encourage you to try, look up these English words, in the gospels. Words that you've heard already. Astonished. Amazed. Marveled. Ah, people usually don't kill someone, by telling nice, folksy, stories. We need to take another look at Jesus. I remind of an event that took place, in, C.S. Lewis' children's story, *The Narnia Chronicles*. Louis has Aslan, a lion, portray the figure of Christ. In the first book the children are about to meet Aslan, and here's how the conversation goes. "Is he quite safe? Susan said, I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion. And that you will dearie and no mistake, said Mrs. Beaver. If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan, without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most, or either just, silly. Then he isn't safe? said Lucy. Safe? said Mr. Beaver, Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." Maybe we lean too much on the cuddly, lamb, metaphor, of our Lord. We need to consider, the fearless, lion, metaphor.

31:01 Jesus believed, that truth, liberates. That fixed ideas, hold us, in bondage. And I'm a Christian Education professor and here's my token object lesson for you. This, is a bicycle lock. Typically we use that, to secure things and hold things in. But I want to represent a fixed idea, coiled up, enslaving us. What happens is a truth, is a, lock, which opens, and liberates us. When you ever consider a lock this week, please, think about, fixed ideas. Jesus engages a kind of, shock, teaching. There's always a twist of plot, the element of surprise. Well consider a modern day parable, from Jesus' teaching adapted for us today, and see if you could catch, the same surprise that the hearers of that day might have. A family of disheveled, unkempt individuals, was stranded by the side of a road, major road on a Sunday morning. They were obvious distress. The mother was sitting on a tattered suitcase, hair uncombed, clothes in disarray, with a glazed look to her eyes, holding a smelly, poorly clad crying baby. The father was unshaved, dressed in coveralls, the loo-look of despair as he tried to crouch with the youngsters. Beside them was a rundown old car that had obviously just, given up the ghost. Well down the road, was, ah, the car was driven by, a seminary student who's serving as a pastor. He was on the way, to church. And though the father of the family waved frantically, the seminary student, couldn't hold up his, congregation, a-and, went, on by. Soon, came another car again. The father waved furiously, but the car was driven by a, a seminary professor, who was late for a professional meeting in a nearby city. He too acted as if he didn't see them and kept his eyes, straight ahead. The next car came by. It was driven by an outspoken, local, atheist, who had never been to church in his life. When he saw the family distress, he took them into his own car, have been inquiring as to their need. He had took them to a local motel, where he paid for weeks' lodging, while the father found work. He also paid for the father to rent a car so they, they could look for work, and gave amount of cash for food, and new clothes. Maybe you can begin, begin to appreciate, some of

Jesus' surprise, stories. Robert Stein in his book, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching*, says this, "The parables, of Jesus, often, disarms opponents. So they'll frequently, th-they listen to him without raising a shield of defense, only to find out too late, that the parable and effect, was, directed at them."

34:02 Two further comments. A comparison, and a contrast. Sometimes we use, a teaching method called, playing, the devil's advocate. Strange name, for teaching method which I use now and then. The purpose is sort of to surprise students and, sort of jar them loose from their thinking so that they can learn truth. But the means to do this is by using, error and deception. Jesus didn't do that. He uses, shocking statements but they are true statements, to jar students, to bring about truth. A comparison, typically when you and I are confronted by reality, it's through a difficult experience, through trials, to suffer. We cannot avoid it. We look deep at ourselves because this burden of this experience, weighs us heavily. By taking Grant Osborne's comments about the speech, event, the encounter mechanism, now I see that teaching, could also present, reality, in a very real way. At least Jesus' teaching did that. Okay there [*inaudible*] think about, back, home, 1999. If Jesus came back to earth today, what prevailing fixed ideas, would he attempt, to dislodge? It seems incumbent upon us as leaders, as teachers, as pastors, the responsibility to help our people, understand, what are the prevailing ideas that are holding, them back? Let just share briefly a few of the ideas I've become, surprised with, in relationship to my own field, in Christian education. Freewill. Freedom of choice. We never discuss that in education. Neither in my master's program at UCR, nor my doctorate program at Michigan State. Why? It's because of their view of human nature. To have free will, you have to have an immaterial soul. And social scientists, hold, to a physicalist view, of human nature, where cause,

and effect reigns. But freewill opens up, a new realm of causation, agent causation. And here's the implication. No teacher, no matter how good they are, at some point in their teaching, it'll be ineffective. Why? 'Cause students have freewill. Humph. Students are in the driver's seat in learning, not the teachers. We persuade, but you students decide whether you'll learn or not. That puts a great responsibility upon you before God, in life. Freewill is a fascinating doctrine.

[36:45](#) Another area, core beliefs. What we've been talking about. Core beliefs are an essential component of our character. I had no idea, that we have no direct, control, over our beliefs, our core beliefs, and that's as it should be. We learn them, passively, over time, which is interesting. So we can influence them by indirectly influencing them over, time. So it behooves us what we put our mind to. We will become, what we think about regularly, and so Scripture tells us to meditate on God's way. And it also, encourages us, us to be careful about what extent we do not capture, thoughts from the world, for the cause of Christ. Because there are larger fixed ideas that pervade. Naturalism. The supernatural can't break in. It's a closed, system. Scientism. The only, truth that counts, the only knowledge that counts, is empirical research. Prove it? Give me a research study. Revelation has no place. Moral relativism. Eh, it's good for you, but, doesn't work for me. Having a false fixed idea, is, a major, problem. Ah, but when you add, a hardened heart, you've got a deadly, combination. It's a deeper issue. It's not, just a matter of the head. It's a matter of the heart. That's something they won't teach you, in an Ed. Psych., course. I came to appreciate this ah, significance only a couple, of weeks ago when as I was going through my one year Bible. Mark 6:52, jumped out at me. It takes place just after the feeding of 5,000, Jesus walking on the water, walks, in the boat, and stills the storm. Note again, the reaction of the disciples, and then Mark's comment, "And Jesus got in the boat, with them, and the wind

stopped, and they were, greatly, astonished, for they had not gained any insight, about the incident of the loaves, that their heart, was, hardened.” William Lane says, “The problem of understanding, is not, primarily intellectual, but existential. It’s a matter, of faith.” Let me say that again, “The problem of understanding is not primarily intellectual, but existential. It’s a matter of faith.” The disciples *did* understand, Jesus’ [incidental instructions]. And they understood, that the multitude, had been fed. But their confused reaction to Jesus indicates they failed, to recognize that God was acting in history, through Jesus. Their misunderstanding, their fixed idea, reflects, unbelief.

39:18 Now this passage brought together for me, something that I’ve been learning in my own, pilgrimage. In the past, I would never use the word “unbelief,” or “hardened heart,” to describe Christians. Heh, that was the characteristic of non-Christians. But I’m now convinced, that we believers also have areas in our lives, pockets where we manifest, hard heart. Hearts of unbelief, even as believers in God. How did I learn this? God, showed me that my own heart, was hard before him, and I was clueless. I thought, seminary professor that I am, I was fairly open to God. I could honestly say throughout the years of my life and in my upbringing, I’ve always, loved God. I was raised in a great Christian home, came to Christ at age 11, received him as my Savior, was baptized in the church, was involved in the church teaching Sunday school during my teenage years. Went to college, worked with Campus Crusade, learned how to share my faith, learned Bible study skills, learned ministry skills which I still use. Went to a great seminary, not a good seminary. Ah, served on a church staff, a seminary professor for number of years, but I lacked something. A deeper, sensitivity, of my sinfulness before a holy God. Since I came to Christ as a child, I only developed a limited, sensitivity, of my sinfulness, and with good

upbringing I thought my character was fairly good, and fairly moral. Ah, but the self-righteousness, and pride was bubbling up, just below the surface. And at once it began with terrible accident. Playing roller hockey, ball hit my eye. I was blind, for three, three weeks. I was in a dark room, had to sit there, lie there, couldn't do a single thing so I wouldn't reinjure my eye. Ah, I'd always wanted to have [time] of solitude with God, and God says, here's a time class. It was a great time, though the physical pain was [*inaudible*]. I learned a lot about prayer, during that time. Later on, in month of August I had the [purpose] to go on a three week, retreat, of solitude, and God, visited me in a very special way. Not like Peter. Not like a vision coming down, but it was m-meaningless, ah meaningless, *meaningful*, momentous, life changing. It was very, very, real. I was prompted to read Romans 1 and 2, and all of a sudden, the words just leapt out at me. Hebrews 4:12 came real. The Word is active and living, and sharper than any two-edge sword. Words jumped out. Boastful. Be merciful. Merciless. Unloving. God was showing me, that the core of my being there was some, some work still to do. God in his graciousness pierced my pride and arrogance, to let go of this false idea about myself. I cried like I'd never cried before, for two hours, as God, ministered, to my soul. It's a very, special time. God loves us so much he doesn't want us leave us, where we are.

[42:40](#) So the challenge for you and me, is to realize, that we do have, fixed ideas that enslave us. They hinder our walk from, with God. They hinder our ministry. They hinder our learning even in seminary. Fixed eyes, fixed ideas enslave. Truth, liberates. While seminary is a place of learning, truth, but learning that should take place sometimes just, doesn't, and there's a complaint that we receive as professors, sometimes from graduates. "I never learned that in seminary." And that may be the case. I believe ah-even when I tell you that, we attempt as

seminary professors to make your seminary experience, much better than ours was, and compared to ours it is better. But, there's always room, for improvement. It maybe we should also consider that as seminary students we have another problem, to reckon with. I was a seminary student and I'm still a student of, of God's word, and it applies to me as well. Am I really, ready, to learn? Is my heart receptive, to new truths? Or do I have a few fixed ideas that are enslaving me, and hindering me? Where's the Spirit prompting me, to grow, and let go of, of harmful ways? What you and I need is a humble, and open heart, before God. We need a heart, diagnostic, by the divine, heart, surgeon. And let me suggest as we approach, the study of God's word, as we approach each seminary class session, as we approach each home Bible study, as we approach each Sunday sermon, we take, David's, prayer to heart. "Search me, O God. Know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there be any hurtful," fixed ideas, "and lead me in your everlasting way." Teachability is a trait of the wise. Proverbs 12:15 says, "The way of the fool, is right in his own eyes. But a wise man is he who listens to counsel." Jesus closes his sermon on the mount with a discussion of contrast between the fool, and the wise. I realize it is hard, for a fool, to part, from his fixed ideas. Let me close with Jesus saying from John 8:31, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth, shall set, you free."

45:09 Let's pray. God our Father, we, truly are, unfinished, projects, in your care. We invite you. We plead with you. Pierce, our pride. Melt, our hearts. Help us to be, receptive to your life, giving truths. Help us, to be set free, from our fixed ideas, and lead us, on, the everlasting way. In Christ when we do pray. Amen.