



Links Players

The Great Teacher

But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. (Matthew 23:8-10)

Who is the greatest golf instructor of all time? I'm sure it's a worthy debate, but let me make a case for Claude Harmon Jr., better known as Butch. Golf was in Butch's blood from the beginning; his father, Claude Sr., was the Head Pro at the famed Winged Foot Golf Club in New York and was the last club pro to win a major championship, the 1948 Masters.

Butch qualified for the PGA Tour in 1968 but had limited success and moved into teaching. He slowly worked his way up the ladder until he began to coach Tour professionals in the early 1990s.

It's said that results speak for themselves, so for brevity let's limit the list of Butch's pupils to those who have won a major championship: Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Ernie Els, Greg Norman, Seve Ballesteros, Jose Maria Olazabal, Dustin Johnson, Davis Love III, Adam Scott, Fred Couples, Darren Clarke, Stewart Cink, Mark Calcavecchia, Steve Elkington, Justin Leonard, Jimmy Walker, and Gary Woodland. That's impressive! When it comes to golf instruction, I'd argue that resume earns Butch the title of a great teacher.

In the Bible, Jesus is referenced by many titles – Good Shepherd, Lamb of God, and Light of the World, among others. Another name that qualifies is “The Great Teacher.” He is called “teacher” or a related term, such as “rabbi,” over 60 times by his disciples and the crowds he attracted.

Jesus used the term himself. In the 13th chapter of John, listen to his words after washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper: “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.” (John 13:12(b)-14)

Throughout his ministry, Jesus used a variety of methods that made his teaching both understandable and memorable. Scholars indicate Jesus was asked over 180 questions in the gospels, but rarely gave a direct answer, preferring to respond with a question of his own. Jesus also had a masterful way of using parables that were striking and thought-provoking.

While Jesus sometimes taught in front of large crowds, his most effective teaching was with his twelve disciples. We are blessed with the Lord's Prayer today because his disciples said, “teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). While they weren't always great students, Jesus' patience and encouragement prepared them to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Perhaps you've heard the quote, "Preach the gospel. If necessary, use words." Jesus was the Great Teacher because he did both. He didn't just talk about the need to obey God; He lived a sinless, righteous life and was perfectly obedient to God. Our Lord and Savior practiced what he preached.

Want to learn from the greatest teacher ever? Just open your Bible, turn to the gospels, and see what the Great Teacher has to say to you personally.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Son. Help us to be disciplined to read your Word daily and see how the Great Teacher speaks to us. Amen

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John Bown

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