



Preaching Without Practice

Adapted from “Stumbling Blocks” series by Dennis Marquardt

One of the toughest tests of Christianity is authentic faith on our part. I wonder; would we always pass such tests? The world is watching, the neighbor is watching, your family is watching, the Lord is watching. The greatest good and the greatest evil to the gospel is not so much what we say, rarely is that wrong, but it is what we do with what we say. The story of the ship The Queen Mary punctuates this truth vividly:

The Queen Mary was the largest ship to cross the oceans when it was launched in 1936. Through four decades and a world war she served until she was retired, anchored as a floating hotel and museum in Long Beach, California.

During the conversion, her three-massive smoke-stacks were taken off to be scraped down and repainted. But on the dock, they crumbled. Nothing was left of the 3/4-inch steel plate from which the stacks had been formed. All that remained were more than thirty coats of paint that had been applied over the years. The steel had rusted away.

When Jesus called the Pharisees "Whitewashed tombs," He meant they had no substance, only an exterior appearance.¹

It is much easier to preach than to practice the same. Yet, God calls us to be different from the world. The world speaks lofty words of peace, but they contradict the words they speak by their actions; we must however for the gospel's sake practice what we preach. The Bible teaches us that it is vital to our witness of the gospel to live what we preach, or we will bring reproach on the word of God. God takes seriously the call to practice what we preach.

¹ Donnie Martin, “The Queen Mary Was the Largest Ship to Cross the Ocean,” Sermon Central, July 27, 2003, <https://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-donnie-martin-stories-sinwagesof-13921#> (accessed July 8, 2017).

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COURAGE

C1: When you hear the phrase “practice what you preach” what does that mean to you? What do you think of when you hear “actions speak louder than our words?”

C2: Has there ever been a time in your life when you said one thing and did something different? Afterward, how did you feel? Did anyone call you out? Make a list of all the unchurched persons who are watching your life. What does your life speak to them?

C3: Read and answer the following.

Matthew 23:1–14 (ESV) Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.”

- Write out five takeaways from these verses.
- Jesus does not say that the message they are sharing is wrong but how they are practicing it, living it day to day, was wrong. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how well you “practice what you preach.”

STRENGTH

S1: Often people are hurt by the actions of someone and they take it out on God. Describe a time when this has happened to you or you have seen this happen.

S2: In the illustration of the Queen Mary ship, the smoke-stacks had rusted away and yet still stood due to the many layers of paint upon them, not allowing the people to see the inner damage. As a man of God, how can you find the strength to make sure you are not painting the outside of our walk with Christ while inside we are rusting away?

S3: Read and answer the following.

Matthew 23:1-14 (ESV)

- What are five things you glean from this passage?
- Jesus exposes the scribes and Pharisees for their lack of practicing what they preach. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you practice what you preach. Write out a plan to improve.

James 1:19-27 (ESV)

- What are three things you glean from these verses?
- What does it mean to you to be a doer of the Word in your life, your church, and your community?



S4: In the next thirty days, find three men to meet with and talk about what it means to practice what you preach. What did you glean from these conversations? Now, if you are a father, have the same conversation with your children. What did you glean from this conversation?

ENDURANCE

E1: Do you have a friend or co-worker that does not go to church because someone in their life has not lived what they preached? How can you begin to build a bridge with them to help them?

E2: The church word for not “practicing what you preach” is hypocrisy. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “hypocrisy?” Write out a plan on how you practice what you preach. How can you mentor and disciple other men to practice what they preach?

E3: Read and answer the following.

Matthew 23:1-14 (ESV)

- List the reasons Jesus gives as to why the scribes and Pharisees did not practice what they preached. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being not much and 4 being all the time, rate yourself on the following.
 - Saying things rather than doing things
 - Putting heavy loads upon the shoulders of men and yet do not do the work themselves
 - Do things to be noticed
 - Love the place of honor rather than be humble servants
 - Enjoy the praise of other men
- Write out a plan to change.

- What does **Matthew 23:11-12 (ESV)** mean to you?



E4: In the next thirty days, find three men and discuss this lesson. What did you glean from these discussions?