

Lesson 13

In Example

Introduction

Who was your hero growing up? Was it ... a president? A civil rights leader? An astronaut? A legendary football coach? Your schoolteacher or principal? Maybe it was a movie star. What about your church leaders, or even better ... your parents?

Who views you as a hero? It's important to consider because someone somewhere is looking up to you in admiration ... following your example. This is a sobering thought. If someone were to spend a week with you, what would they come away concluding? Would they identify you as a strong or well rooted Christian? It's not that you don't have problems or are perfect in every way. But because of your relationship with Christ, you should be tending toward spiritual stability. When the winds of life blow – you stand. Yes, you may get some scars along the way – but you continue to hold up by the grace and power of our Lord. This certainly stands in contrast to weaker Christians whose stresses and setbacks can often lead to poor decisions, cynicism, and bad choices.

In this lesson we will look at three reasons why your spiritual example is so important.

You can help demonstrate spiritual qualities

Others are looking to you to see how you do spiritual things and then make the connection back to their own life. They believe that if they hang around you, they can see the positive and what works.

To accomplish this, you need to be a person of character. We stand on the rock of truth.

To Timothy Paul wrote: *set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity*, 1 Timothy 4.12. It has been said that *the greatest tool of leadership is the power of an exemplary life*.²⁴ Christians are to set an example or “pattern” or “model” for others. Note the five areas Paul addresses:

5 areas to address:

1. **Speech.** *For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.* Matthew 12.34-37.
 - a. honesty - Ephesians 4.25
 - b. angry speech prohibited - Ephesians 4.26
 - c. slanderous words forbidden - Ephesians 4.31
 - d. speak to edify - Ephesians 4.29
2. **Conduct.** The godly life brings power and authority to a man's message. See James 3.13; 1 Peter 1.15; 2.12; 3.16.

²⁴ “Example is the most powerful rhetoric” (cited in I. D. E. Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 96)

3. **Love.** Self-sacrificing service on behalf of others regardless of how one feels. See John 15.13; Philippians 2.17; Colossians 1.24; 2 Corinthians 12.15; 1 Thessalonians 2.7-12. Epaphroditus is a great example, Philippians 2.25-30.
4. **Faith.** Unswerving commitment. Loyalty to Christ.
5. **Purity.** (Sexual purity in actions and in the intentions of the heart.)

See also 1 Corinthians 4.16; 11.1; Philippians 3.17; 4.9; 1 Thessalonians 1.5-6; 2 Thessalonians 3.7-9; Hebrews 13.7

You can become a source of motivation

Spiritual mentors can be inspiring ... and contagious! Are you an encourager of people? Let's look at two passages from Paul's writing:

No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for **building up** someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear, Ephesians 4.29.

Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. **Let your speech always be gracious**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person, Colossians 4.5-6.

May we be the person who is committed to saying the right thing at the right time, being centered on others and not self. Do we have the right mindset that sees the good? Remember... *maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins*, 1 Peter 4.8.

You can become a source of godly advice

Who do you go to for advice? If your marriage were falling apart, or you were facing a career change, or problems at home, to whom would you turn? A coworker? An advice column or blog? A TV show? *Really?*

Most of us would go to a strong Christian so that we would obtain the best advice, information that is trusted and full of wisdom. Now, are you working on building your own knowledge and wisdom? Are you moving with consistency between what you profess and what you practice?

Conclusion...

Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything in love, 1 Corinthians 16.13-14.

God wants Christians who are committed to being deeply rooted in Jesus Christ. We need our kids to see godly families in action. Happy & godly marriages. We need to be a people who stand for Jesus. We need to be a people who speak out for Jesus. We can be all of this if we are a people who are deeply rooted in Christ.

For Thought and Reflection

1. What does it mean to be an example? How important is your influence?

2. Who are some people that could be watching and following you?

3. What areas of focus from 1 Timothy 4.12 do you need most work on? Why? What is your plan of action to improve?

4. Who is someone you can build up spiritually?

5. What is your plan on developing a greater consistency between what you profess and and what you practice?